Antarctica 1947



Felipe Botaya

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BOOKS



Antártida 1947

The war
that never existed

Felipe Botaya

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FOREWORD

When my friend Felipe Botaya asked me to write the foreword to his third book, I immediately committed the discourtesy of turning down his offer. I didn't even thank him for thinking of me to feature in the opening pages of his book. On the contrary, I even suggested he look for someone of greater stature and influence among his potential future readers, which I assumed, in the end, would help him sell more copies.

Nevertheless, and as proof that you, the reader, are reading these lines, I eventually gave in to your insistence. But this posed a problem for me: what could I possibly say? Even though I have known the book since its inception, from the very first outlines of the story, long before a single page had been written, how could I offer an objective opinion whilst setting aside the admiration I feel for Felipe Botaya's dedication when he immerses himself in the research and development of these historical topics which he masters so well?

His previous book, **Operation Hagen**, appealed to readers with a passion for suspense and to history buffs, regardless of which side they were on when reading it. I must confess that I myself am reluctant to find any merit in military epics in general, and German ones in particular. However, I must admit that I make an exception for the works of Felipe Botaya, who, moreover, rigorously seeks out and provides historical data for the most demanding collectors.

Antarctica 197. *The War That Norica* Rxii/ió is a clear example of this blend of historical scholarship and entertainment. I confess that, as well as enjoying reading it, I have returned to the atlases to identify on the maps those points and coordinates where the story he tells us unfolds.

Antarctica has always struck me as a mysterious, remote continent, full of untold wonders and beyond all convention. But then again, is there any convention greater than war?

And it is precisely this that the novel deals with: war. Or rather, it tells us about the mysterious events surrounding a military operation that took place after the Second World War had ended. A military operation which, incidentally, *like* so many others, never 'officially' existed and about which the history books know nothing.

The novel tells us about everything that the military and governments conceal from the public and even from their own allies—especially if the outcome of their covert operations is not as expected.

To achieve this, Felipe Botaya has spent two years interviewing many people, 'delving' into out-of-print books, as well as second-hand bookshops, which his teaching engagements with business schools and universities have allowed him to visit in Berlin, London, Rome, Paris... It is in all these and other places that he has found almost hidden bibliography amongst the thousands of 'politically correct' books that lie in plain sight of the public interested in the official history of victors and vanquished, of those wars—all wars—in which no one ever wins and perhaps we all lose.

Antarctica 1Ç 7. *The War That Never Was* is an exercise in investigation and discovery. It is a novel that reveals what those who pull the strings of disasters and wars believe they have kept hidden from the prying eyes of history itself. For sometimes, to unravelling all these plots, a brave, persevering and rigorous writer is needed, with a sufficiently firm resolve to prove that nothing—not even the best-kept secret—can remain beneath the ice for long. From the white, frozen territories of Antarctica, from the offices of the capitals that emerged victorious from the penultimate disaster

among civilised peoples, a story is emerging that, little by little, immerses the reader in an engaging and enlightening account of one of the best-kept secrets to date by the most overwhelmingly powerful army of all time.

Ah! And we mustn't forget that the war has continued ever since, involving more than two hundred armed conflicts across five continents, with more victims—both dead and displaced—than in both world wars combined. Will we ever come across books and writers who uncover the inner workings of these wars and help us understand the madness of our times?

Alfonso Viñuela
Managing Director of FORMACTIVA
Lecturer at Business Schools and Universities

Chapter 1

A STRANGE CAPTURE

One of the sailors stepped away from the group on deck, climbed up to the bridge and opened the door decisively. The captain of the small fishing boat turned towards the newcomer as if he were expecting news.

'We're already over the shoal, Javier,' the sailor addressed the captain familiarly, pointing to a spot on the sea a short distance away.

"Good, the coordinates indicate we're right on the spot."

The captain bent over an old nautical chart, turned a small compass, marked the area with a pencil and jotted down some numbers with the coordinates. "Tell the others and start casting the nets. I'll be down shortly."

The sea was calm. The vast mouth of the Mar del Plata was awe-inspiring in its scale. They had been sailing for twelve hours and dawn had broken only a short while ago. The coast of Uruguay could be seen on the horizon. It was not the first time they had skirted the border or entered that country's territorial waters. Relations between Argentina and Uruguay swung from love to hate in the blink of an eye. However, the search for fish had brought them to this point and they preferred the risk involved in being where they were.

For some time now, it had become a very good fishing ground, and that meant a good day's pay for the whole crew

Javier Céspedes, the captain, stepped out onto the bridge and made his way to the stern of the vessel, where his men were already in the midst of setting the nets as the boat moved forward. First on the port side and then on the starboard side, he watched as the operation unfolded without a hitch. The sea was extraordinarily clear, and it was easy to see the fish—tuna, to be precise—passing in groups beneath the boat. They were black shadows with streamlined profiles, their skin casting almost metallic flashes as they turned rapidly and in unison.

The depth was about a hundred metres and the seabed was a very white sandbank, so it was not difficult to spot any kind of prey.

He looked at Antonio, his friend and the more experienced sailor. Antonio smiled at him

—We'll have a good catch, Javier. Ana, the fortune-teller at the port, told me so...

The five remaining men burst out laughing in unison, whilst Javier returned to the bridge to manoeuvre the boat in a circle and catch as many tuna as possible. Manuel, another of his men, began preparing the hold to store the future catch. When the net was long enough, they prepared the harpoons with which they would finish off the tuna as they were caught and hauled up to the ship's rail. It was a favourable fishing situation, as tuna were usually caught on the high seas, far from the coast. The fact that they were close by made fishing easier and cheaper, as there was no need to undertake a long and tiring voyage for everyone.

You could see the tuna leaping out of the water in groups. Their movements were swift and decisive. There was a great deal of activity beneath the surface. Foam and huge bubbles gave away the fish's exact location. It must have been a huge school. Perhaps the fortune-teller was right.

From the bridge, Javier had an excellent view of how the tuna were being drawn towards the boat slowly but surely. His men were in high spirits at the economic prospects opening up for them all. The truth is that last summer

Things had been pretty rough and money had been tight. Javier had promised his wife that 1945 would be his last year in the trade. He felt tired, but he said that every year. Yet whenever he met up with his crew and other fishermen, he found it very difficult to turn his back on the sea and all its magic. The truth was that fishing had been, and still was, his life. He remembered that, together with Antonio, they had started out very young as crew members on deep-sea vessels operating in the Cape Horn and Antarctic regions. It was an adventurous and hard life. There they learnt the secrets of the trade and developed the instinct to track their prey and find their hiding places.

After working on smaller fishing boats, but closer to his home in Buenos Aires, he had managed to buy the 'Matilde Rosa I'. He also persuaded Antonio to work with him, and the truth is that they were able to recruit a very good crew, with whom they had already been working for several years. At sea, complete trust between crewmates is essential.

Apart from helping fellow sailors in distress at sea and shipwrecked people, silence was another unwritten rule in the world of professional fishermen. You must never tell others where a good fishing ground could be found. The race to get there could be ruthless, and the consequence was losing a fair amount of money. It had happened to him on occasion, and he had done the same himself. No one was without blame in this business. He knew that other fishing boats were also heading for this spot. He had to act fast.

He looked up at the sky and saw that it was still glorious. That helped. Considering they were in the southern winter, this 22nd of August was somewhat warmer than usual. The thermometer read 15°C. As he was thinking about all this, something caught his attention. It was the silence all around him. Something was happening. The sea was absolutely calm, not a trace of the school of tuna. He stopped the engine, which was idling slowly.

He looked aft. His men were staring in disbelief from both sides of the gunwale. Everything had changed in an instant.

"What's happening, Antonio?" shouted Javier from one of the bridge portholes.

"The whole school of tuna has passed beneath the boat and headed north," the others nodded in agreement with Antonio's words. "It was like an electric spark. I've never seen anything like it. I don't know what's happened."

He pointed to a tuna writhing in the net and added:

"Only this one has been caught alive. Look at the others."

Several tuna were found dead, entangled in the tangled mess the net had become.

"Tuna don't die in the net. It's very unusual. Something must have happened to frighten them so badly that they died of suffocation."

Javier looked at the lifeless bodies of several tuna bobbing up and down with the waves. There was no blood, as was usual in this type of fishing. He shifted his gaze from his vantage point and something beneath the water caught his eye. He could see a huge shape, contrasting against the white seabed, rising towards the surface. It was black, without a single glint of light. Suddenly, some 'masts' emerged a few metres from the 'Matilde Rosa I'. Behind the masts appeared an elongated conning tower and finally the hull of a submarine. The identification U-2193 was clearly visible on the side of the enormous conning tower. The sea churned around the vessel and waves created by the newly arrived submarine rocked the small fishing boat.

Javier's crew had fallen silent at the surprising sight. It was clear why the tuna had vanished at the sudden appearance of the approaching submarine. Javier examined it closely and had no doubt that it was a German submarine. However, it was a model he had never seen before in the war documentaries shown at local cinemas. Its lines were very clean. He adjusted his dark blue woollen cap and went down to join his men.

There was no sign of activity on the submarine. Suddenly, a hatch on one side of the conning tower opened and several armed men emerged. Their uniforms clearly indicated their German origin. Among them stood out the man who appeared to be the captain of the vessel, wearing a white cap tilted to one side. A beard was the common feature. They signalled for the 'Matilde Rosa I' to approach them. It seemed they wanted to tell them something.

Javier returned to the bridge, followed by Antonio, with the intention of beginning the approach manoeuvre.

"What's all this, Javier? What's going on?" asked Antonio asked nervously.

"I don't know. And for now, we've got no choice but to do as we're told."

Javier took the helm, started the engine and slowly steered the fishing boat towards the submarine. The submarine was enormous compared to Javier's boat.

'The war ended in early May and it's now late August. That's a German submarine! What's it doing here!

Javier looked at him.

"Yes, it's a German submarine and the war ended three months ago. Now we'll find out what's going on."

Antonio picked up a pair of binoculars from the bridge and looked towards the on the horizon. Three more fishing boats could be clearly made out as they approached the area.

'We've got company,' said Antonio.

"I'm sure they're Raúl's boats," said Javier confidently. "That doesn't matter now. Go down and throw a line towards the submarine."

It wasn't necessary, as the divers had already quickly secured their vessel to the fishing boat. The distance between the two vessels was a mere few metres. Agilely, the man who appeared to be the captain and two other men slid along the rope and climbed aboard the 'Matilde Rosa I'. Upon reaching the deck, the submariners raised their hands to their military caps and saluted the fishing boat's crew. Javier came up at that moment. One of the sailors accompanying the captain acted as a translator into Spanish for what the officer was saying.

"We send you our regards, Captain, and please forgive us if we have caused you any inconvenience in your work," began the translator after a brief pause following his superior's words, and continued: "Captain Lippsmacher and the entire crew of the German submarine U-2193 request that you escort us to the port of Buenos Aires. We wish to surrender in Argentina, at the Mar del Plata Naval Base." Our crew consists of 52 men.

Javier could not believe his ears.

“Tell your captain that we are fishermen, not soldiers. Would you prefer us to call the coastguard?”

“That won’t be necessary,” the captain replied emphatically through the interpreter. “We’ll follow you to the base and meet you there.”

It was clear that this was the decision, and there was little room for discussion for Javier and his men.

“Thank you for your help, Captain,” said the submariners as they took their leave, after shaking hands with the crew of the ‘Matilde Rosa I’.

They nimbly returned to their vessel and Javier went back to the bridge to set the new course. Antonio followed him.

“Once again, we’ve got no choice. Let’s do as they say,” Javier began, anticipating what Antonio might say. The rest gathered up all the fishing gear and went up to the bridge, where Javier made their situation clear to them. Reluctantly, they all agreed. A good chunk of their wages had gone down the drain.

“Can we get paid for finding the submarine and taking it to port, Javier?” asked Damián, the youngest, though they were all asking themselves the same question.

‘It’s not a wreck, nor a drifting vessel, nor one abandoned by its crew. From what I can see, it’s a submarine in combat readiness, which is surrendering and requesting an “escort” —he emphasised the word—, nothing more. And for that reason, we’re not entitled to anything. I don’t like losing money either, but that’s the way it is,’ concluded Javier.

The faces of those present showed a certain dismay, but they had no choice but to accept it.

By that time, the other fishing boats that had been spotted in the distance had already arrived in the area. Using signal lights, one of them asked what the situation was. Antonio took the powerful *spotlight* and replied, indicating that they were heading for the Argentine military base. Given the extraordinary nature of the situation, the other boats also joined the convoy.

On the submarine’s deck, one could see quite a few crew members resting, getting some fresh air and sunshine, and chatting amongst themselves. They did not seem concerned by the arrival of the other fishing boats.

group. On the submarine's conning tower, Captain Lippsmacher and other men could be seen looking through binoculars in all directions. Next to them were the two turrets mounted with anti-aircraft guns, one aimed forward and the other aft. It was a very modern submarine and completely different from anything Javier had ever seen. He was particularly struck by the large number of antennas or 'masts' protruding from the conning tower. He counted as many as six. Apart from the periscope and the radio antenna, Javier couldn't think of what the others might be or what their possible uses might be.



The U-2193 photographed entering the Mar del Plata Naval Base, Argentina

The submarine moved forward with great grace, keeping pace with the fishing boats. It emitted a faint hum, *like* that of a turbine, and left hardly any wake in its wake. Nor did it emit any exhaust fumes or smoke. They had been sailing together for two hours now, and the Argentine coastline was clearly visible. The base lay on the outskirts of the capital, to the east. Javier estimated that they could reach it in about four hours. Suddenly, the silhouette of an aeroplane approaching from the west was clearly visible on the horizon. It was clearly coming from the Argentine coast. The submarine's crew pointed in that direction.

As it drew nearer, it became clear that it was a military seaplane. It circled the whole group twice, whilst the submarine's crew waved in greeting. The German vessel gradually slowed down until it came to a halt. The plane landed very close to the submarine. A rubber dinghy was launched from the plane

which was boarded by three men. Javier watched the operation through his binoculars. One of the men was wearing an Argentine Navy uniform and the other two were in Air Force uniforms. Paddling resolutely, they soon reached the submarine, from which a mooring line was thrown down to them. Two of the men climbed aboard, whilst the third waited in the dinghy. They entered the German vessel. Shortly afterwards, one of the men came out and boarded the small boat, which quickly returned to the aircraft. The Argentine naval representative had remained on board the submarine.

"It seems the military had already been informed from the submarine…" said Manuel, who was also watching the scene from the bridge. "The one who's gone up is surely a pilot, who'll guide the submarine to base. What do you think, Javier?"

Javier remained silent whilst continuing to watch the entire operation closely.

"Yes, *I think* you're right. At this moment, the submarine is already in Argentine hands. Let's see what the next step is, though I can imagine it."

The seaplane started its engines and slowly approached the 'Matilde Rosa I', skimming over the sea. The submarine had already begun its journey towards the Argentine coast, having bid farewell to the fishermen. From the aircraft's cockpit, signals were sent instructing them to leave the area and continue with their work. The matter was now under military jurisdiction. Following the message, the pilot revved the engines and the plane travelled a short distance before taking off from the sea without difficulty.

Slowly, everyone returned to their daily routine at sea. There was nothing else they could do. They were left with a bitter taste in their mouths, as if something wasn't quite right. But above all else, one question lingered: what was a German submarine of that type doing three months after the war had ended?

Chapter 2

A DIFFERENT MISSION

Patrick Malone was greeted by Vice-Admiral Clark's secretary.

'Please, Captain Malone, you can leave your things here. You'll be more comfortable. I'll go and tell the Vice-Admiral straight away."

Patrick left his coat and officer's cap beside him on the comfortable waiting bench and watched as the secretary spoke on the phone to Clark, letting him know he was there. He couldn't understand why the vice-admiral had called him so urgently, when he was on manoeuvres in the Gulf of Mexico, near the small base at Corpus Christi in Texas. His ship, the submarine 'USS Monitor', was taking part alongside fifteen other vessels in manoeuvres that had been planned in advance for early September in the Gulf of Mexico.

Clark opened the door and addressed Malone with a smile.

"Patrick, how are you? Thank you for coming."

He invited him into his office and gestured to one of the armchairs. He would not sit at his desk, as he wanted maximum trust and closeness. Malone noticed this immediately.

"What's going on, Vincent? What's so important that you've made me come all the way to Norfolk?" asked Malone with the utmost confidence, as Vice-Admiral Clark was his ex-wife's father. The vice-admiral had always considered his daughter to be a fool because after joining a cult, she had lost

Patrick. But, despite the divorce, Clark continued to maintain an excellent relationship with his former son-in-law, both personally and professionally.

"I'll get straight to the point, Patrick, you know me. At the end of August, another German submarine surrendered in Argentina."

Patrick looked somewhat surprised.

—Well, he's not the first to do so. I remember that U-530 and U-977 also surrendered to the Argentinians in July and August this year. It's certainly curious and surprising. But,

what's that got to do with me?

—Well, this time it's different, Patrick. The vessel the Argentinians have in Mar del Plata is of interest to us. It's a very modern German submarine, a Type XXI.

—I thought we'd already captured a German Type XXI submarine, which also surrendered in the middle of the Atlantic.

—True, but its most modern equipment had been dismantled by the crew themselves before they surrendered. The Walther propulsion turbines had been sabotaged beyond repair and they had disposed of the ultra-modern torpedoes they were carrying.

Just imagine! The ones we received were 'incomplete'. This one, however, is complete. It even includes the logbook and the secret codes for its ENIGMA machine. Look at these photos of our agents in Argentina —Clark handed him several photos of the submersible at the military base. It looked impressive—. It was commanded by Captain Lippsmacher, a 26-year-old 'lad' with a crew made up of very young sailors too, with no family commitments.

Clark leaned back in his armchair.

—Just think, that submarine is superior to any of ours. You don't know this because it's classified and isn't yet part of the official history of the war, but to give you an idea of the military capability of those German vessels, on 2 May this year, shortly before the German surrender, a flotilla of Type XXI submarines set sail from the Norwegian fjord of Kristiansand on a final combat mission towards Iceland. You can well imagine, Patrick, the typical 'wolf pack' —Patrick nodded at the classic attack formation of German submarines against Allied convoys in the Atlantic—. The Germans located a

A British task force of eight ships sailed right into the thick of it without the British realising what was happening. They used new types of torpedoes that wiped out the British fleet in no time at all. And to make matters worse, the British had no idea who was attacking them, whilst their ships exploded one after another and sank without a chance of survival. That submarine flotilla vanished without a trace...

"All this is very interesting and novel, Vincent. Besides, you know of my interest in and work on submarines, but what's my role in all this? That submarine is in Argentine hands and there's nothing more we can do now," Patrick placed the photographs on the coffee table.

—Just as with the previous submarines, Argentina is cooperating with us. The Germans believe that if they surrender there, they won't be deported, as happened with the battleship Graf Spee. But all that has changed since then. The Argentinians are allowing us to bring the crew in for questioning and, most importantly, to bring the submarine U-2195 to Norfolk — Clark stared at Patrick, waiting for his reaction, but he just looked pensive. — That's where you come in. I want you to bring that submarine here as soon as possible. And I'm asking you because I trust you completely. I need to be sure it arrives safely and without any leaks to the press, as in previous cases. It's a top-secret mission. Information on this matter is classified. Choose the men you need, and make sure they are people you trust completely.

Patrick stared intently at Clark.

"Is that all, Vincent?" he suggested. "We've known each other for a long time, and I think there's more to this, don't you?"

The vice-admiral leaned back in his comfortable armchair and, after gazing at the ceiling with resignation and stroking his chin, turned his gaze to his former son-in-law.

"Look, Patrick, something's going on that we don't quite understand. These submarines—and U-2193 too—have covered vast distances at sea. Lippsmacher's vessel has been submerged for over 70 days, which is a world-class feat…"

Patrick nodded in surprise at that spectacular fact. He couldn't even imagine what it must be like for the crew to remain

so long underwater and the psychological strain that entailed.

“Do we know anything about their mission?” he asked.

—According to what we have learnt from our interrogations of the crews of the two previous submarines and their captains, Wermouth of U-530 and Schaeffer of U-977, all of them set sail from Germany except for U-2193, which departed from Norway a few days before the unconditional surrender. All had young crews, younger than usual. And the strangest thing is that all of them, including U-2195, had ended up in Antarctica. We have not been able to ascertain why, or what they were looking for or doing there.

“The Germans have always shown an interest in Antarctica,” Patrick interjected. “There have been various expeditions since the end of the last century.”

“So are we, Patrick,” Clark clarified. “Antarctica is also a subject I know you’re keen on, and it will have to do with what’s currently being discussed in the highest circles in Washington and your involvement in all of it.”

At the age of 29, Patrick’s knowledge of the Antarctic continent was far greater than that of a mere amateur. Aside from his military career, Patrick had been an enthusiastic follower of the expeditions led by Richard Evelyn Byrd in 1929, 1934 and 1939—who now held the rank of admiral—and was quite familiar with everything that had been discovered on the frozen continent up to that point. He was also aware of the findings of the British and German expeditions, and the bitter disputes between Chile and Argentina.

‘I’ll tell you something else that is also classified information,’ ," continued Clark. "Since the war ended in early May this year, 124 German U-boats have disappeared, and nobody knows where they are. Furthermore, most of them are of the most modern type, the Type XXI, such as U-2193. Those Type XXI submarines I mentioned earlier make up a large proportion of those missing vessels."

“That’s a whole fleet!” exclaimed Patrick. “They can’t hide all those submarines. Are you sure about that information? That could be very dangerous for us.”

“This information is entirely accurate, Patrick, and, as you say, dangerous for us,” Vice-Admiral Clark stood up and walked over to the window. “Naval Intelligence has been working on this matter and has calculated that perhaps 10 per cent of that number may have sunk after striking a drifting mine or due to a technical fault.” In other words, a solitary disappearance with no record. But the rest—more than 100—must be somewhere. A vast place, far from any observation...

“Antarctica?” suggested Patrick, who had guessed the answer.

Clark smiled slightly:

“That’s what we think.”

“In other words, yes. And what’s the next step, Vincent?” Patrick asked bluntly.

“I can’t say for certain, as there are several ideas on the table,” Clark returned to his armchair and settled himself, seemingly searching for a coherent and satisfactory explanation for Patrick without breaching the secrecy surrounding that information. What I can tell you is that next month, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal has called a meeting in Washington with Admirals Nimitz and Byrd and Captain Creuze. Something big is brewing, and after that meeting it will become clear what is going to be done and what the objective is. I can’t tell you anything more at this stage. I’m part of Byrd’s advisory team, as you know, and I’ll be involved from the very start.

—Well, I’ll wait, although you told me earlier that I’m also involved in all this.

“For now, get that damn submarine to Norfolk,” Clark seemed keen to wrap up the meeting and get Patrick moving. “That’s your mission. And not just because I have absolute faith in you, but because you’re one of our best submarine officers. We’ll stay in touch, and I’ll let you know the next steps you need to take.”

“And my submarine, Vincent?”

“Don’t worry about the ‘Monitor’ for now. I’ve already made the arrangements and it will continue the manoeuvres without you. It’s in good hands. Don’t worry.”

Clark had it all figured out and had already taken the steps to relieve Patrick of his duties so he could devote himself to the new mission.

—You'll be selecting several of my men, and I might need a German who knows the Model XXI well. (Is that possible? —suggested Patrick, as he stood up.

"No problem, as they seem to be cooperating well so far in their Argentine confinement. In any case, don't trust them. Any Germans you might need must be kept under constant surveillance on board the submarine so they don't get any 'strange ideas'"—Clark emphasised this last sentence, and Patrick realised he had to prevent any potential sabotage whilst they were heading to Norfolk.

"Very well, Vincent," the two men walked to the office door, "I have two crew members on my submarine who are of German origin and speak the language perfectly. One is my second-in-command, Kenneth Miele. They will be my contacts with the German sailors we select."

At that moment, Betty, Clark's secretary, entered.

"Forgive me for interrupting, but I thought it important to let you know, sir," she said, addressing Clark. "Admiral Byrd is on the phone and wishes to speak to you."

"Don't worry, Betty, you've done very well. Captain Malone was just about to leave. Please see him out," Clark said to Patrick. "I'm sure it's all about this matter. I think the ball is about to start. You can put the admiral through to me, Betty. Goodbye, Captain Malone, and good luck. Keep me informed."

"Yes, sir," replied Patrick, tipping his Navy officer's cap with two fingers and leaving the office. He was impressed by the high calibre of Clark's contacts.

Once outside, Betty showed him the way.

"No need to trouble yourself, Betty, I know the way out very well," Patrick smiled at her. "I was stationed here for nearly a year during the war. Thank you."

"You're welcome, Captain," Betty returned to her desk by the door of Clark's office and, after giving Patrick a smile, put Admiral Byrd's call through.

He liked Betty's smile, but soon his mind began to recall details about Antarctica that he had taught himself. Indeed, what he knew of the frozen continent was incredible. The Antarctic continent at the Earth's South Pole is almost circular in shape, 4,500 kilometres in diameter, being

the third-largest continent on the planet, covering an area of around 14 million km². It is four times the size of the United States. Its name, Antarctica, comes from the Greek word ‘antarktikos’, meaning ‘opposite the Arctic’. It is the highest continent in the world, with an average elevation of 2,000 metres above sea level. Mount Erebus, at 3,794 metres, is an active volcano situated on the eastern coast of Ross Island. The Vinson Massif, at 4,897 metres, is the highest peak on the entire continent.

More than 85% of the land area covered by permanent ice is located in Antarctica. The average thickness is 2.4 kilometres, although areas where the thickness reaches almost 5 kilometres have been detected in Terre Adélie (69° 54' South, 135° 12' East). The volume of water represented by Antarctica’s permanent ice is such that its complete melting would raise sea levels by around 75 metres across the entire planet.

It is also the continent with the lowest average humidity on Earth, as well as the lowest average temperature. In July 1993, a temperature of *minus* 89.5°C was recorded at the New Zealand Vanda station, the lowest figure ever recorded. This phenomenon is due to two factors: its high average altitude and the low level of solar radiation it receives. Antarctica has also recorded the strongest winds: 327 kilometres per hour in July 1972, a figure recorded by the French Dumont d’Urville station.

Although the Antarctic continent was discovered by the Spaniard Gabriel de Castilla in the 17th century, expeditions to Antarctica officially began in the early 19th century. It is surprising that as early as the 5th century BC, Herodotus spoke of a possible ‘terra incognita’, that is, ‘unknown land’ at the far reaches of the southern hemisphere. Some Greek geographers even went so far as to calculate the existence of a landmass south of the Indian Ocean. It is unknown how they calculated this or what they based it on, but they already had advanced notions that there was territory at those latitudes.

One explanation for such incredible knowledge could be the maps of Piri Reis, admiral of the fleet in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf and a Turkish cartographer, who in 1515 produced the maps that bear his name and who in 1517 presented them to Sultan Selim I, the conqueror of Egypt. It is known that Piri Reis used older maps, specifically 20 older plans and 8 world maps drawn up in

the time of Alexander the Great, and that they depicted the entire inhabited world of that era. Apart from other continents appearing with great precision, the maps show Antarctica without ice! In other words, an image from almost 10,000 years ago, and following a study by cartographers from the US Navy Hydrographic Institute, they determined the high accuracy of this information and, most surprisingly—



Map of Antarctica with current geographical features

is that the view of Antarctica depicted in these ancient charts could only have been obtained from the air and at a great height... It is a surprising matter that remains unexplained to this day.

At the start of the 19th century, and specifically in 1820, the formal or official discovery of the Antarctic continent was officially declared. The discoverers were the members of the Russian expedition led by Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen. That same year, the British geographer Edward Bransfield and the whaler Nathaniel Palmer confirmed the Russian expedition's discovery.

However, by 1815 Admiral Brown, with a squadron comprising the frigate "Hércules" and the brig

The “Trinidad” sailed through the southern waters, reaching 65° south latitude in what is now the Bellingshausen Sea. The objective of that mission was military, specifically to oppose the Spanish ships prowling the area on the Pacific Ocean side. At that time, Argentine seal hunters ventured out in search of skins and oil, which they then traded in the markets of the East. Despite the secrecy surrounding any fishing ground or area rich in raw materials, it is known that the ship “San Juan Nepomuceno” between 1817 and 1820 and the seal-hunting vessel “Espíritu Santo” had reached the islands known as the South Shetland Islands, which were officially discovered in In 1818, the English sailor Palmer followed in the wake of those ships. In 1848, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Piedrabuena, as first officer of the ship ‘E. Davison’, reached beyond 68° South latitude, and in 1852, near Margarita Bay, his ship was trapped in the ice for thirty days, leaving it completely isolated. In 1867, under the command of the seal-hunting ships “Espora” and “Julia”, they managed to reach 67°20’ South and 68°40’.

The official discovery of the new continent and its possession by Argentina also led to regulations governing the natural resources from the Falkland Islands southwards, primarily fishing. Consequently, as early as 22 October 1821, the law “Provisions Relating to the Hunting of Amphibians” was enacted. And, pursuant to the Decree of 10 June 1829, the Political-Military Command of the Falkland Islands was established.

In 1891, assistance was provided to Belgian Lieutenant Adrien de Guerlache, whose ship “Belgium” was repaired and supplied with coal in Ushuaia. Also in 1891, assistance was provided to Dr Otto Nordenskjöld of Sweden in his research in the area.

The first permanent Antarctic base was established in the early 20th century: in December 1903, the Scottish scientific explorer Dr Williams Bruce had to repair his ship and restock supplies in order to continue his journey. Dr Bruce offered the facilities and equipment used for sale, on the condition that the transaction remain confidential and that the transfer be publicly presented as a donation in gratitude for the assistance received, with the Argentine government committing to continue the observations. The Argentine government

accepted the proposal by Decree Letter "D" No. 27 of 2 January 1904, countersigned by President Roca, which authorised the establishment of the Observatory and appointed the staff.

A few days later, on 20 January 1904, the establishment of a “post office” was approved, and the 19-year-old Argentine citizen Hugo Acuña was sent there; on 21 January of that year, he was granted the status of “resident” for the purpose of setting up the first post office in Antarctica. On 22 February 1904, the brig “Scotia” arrived at the South Orkney Islands; the Scottish flag was lowered and the flag of the Argentine Republic was hoisted.

In 1901–1903, Argentine Ensign José María Sobral joined Dr Nordenskjöld’s expedition as a meteorologist, magnetologist and geodesist. They were rescued by the corvette Uruguay, commanded by Lieutenant Julián Irizar, on 10 November 1903, after the ship “Antartic”, commanded by the Norwegian Captain Larsen, was shattered by the ice.

In 1903, the ship of the Frenchman Dr Juan Bautista Charcot was repaired following major damage and resupplied with provisions and coal.

In 1911, assistance was provided to the German Dr Wilhelm Filtchner. Eight Siberian ponies and 75 Greenland dogs were housed and cared for at the Buenos Aires Zoo. He was also supplied with provisions and coal, and a radio link was established with the Argentine Ministry of the Navy, along with the transmission of regular weather reports.

In 1914, the Englishman Ernest Shackleton obtained assurances from the Argentine government that the world’s southernmost radio station, located on Isla de los Estados, would transmit precise time signals specifically for that ship. A series of legal provisions followed, shelters were installed on islands, and Antarctic military detachments were established.

Now Patrick had the opportunity to learn these details and many more first-hand, though he was not entirely at ease. When Vice-Admiral Clark involved him in a matter classified as secret, he could expect anything but peace of mind.

Chapter 3

ON BOARD A GERMAN SUBMARINE XXI

Patrick Malone arrived at the Mar del Plata Naval Base on 25 October 1945. He was accompanied by the mechanics Stan White and Roger Blaufen. The latter spoke perfect German, which would be a great help in understanding how the submarine worked. Also arriving with Patrick were John 'Bullet' Creighton as the communications officer, and Kenneth Miele as Patrick's second-in-command, who also spoke German. Bert Eklund, a friend of Patrick's from naval school, accompanied them as controller. Five members of the US Military Police (MP) were already at the base and would join the whole group to keep an eye on the Germans whilst the crossing took place.

"Well then, where's our 'little fish', Captain?" John asked as he stepped off the small coach that had dropped them off at the base, whilst picking up his rucksack.

"I don't know, John, but don't get nervous. He can't be far away, I'm sure," replied Patrick, glancing at the others.

"Is it as modern as they say?" Bert was very pleased with his part in the mission. He looked like a child with new shoes.

At that moment, two Argentine naval officers arrived, accompanied by three American officers.

"Welcome, gentlemen," said one of the Argentine officers, "I am Lieutenant Carlos Cifuentes and this is Petty Officer First Class Ariel Benítez."

They exchanged a formal military salute and Patrick proceeded to introduce his men. The American military personnel also introduced themselves. They were the military attaché in Argentina and two of his officers. After the greetings, they helpfully assisted Patrick and his men with their bags and rucksacks. As they walked towards the harbour where the German submarine was moored, the attaché, Edward Darlington, spoke to Patrick discreetly:

"Captain Malone, I have been informed of your mission here and, for our part, we are at your disposal for whatever you may need, and also to hand over these documents received via diplomatic pouch this morning, addressed to you personally."

"Thank you, attaché," replied Patrick, as he opened the envelope containing various documents. "By the way, where are the German crew and their captain at the moment?"

"They're in those barracks and are leaving in three days for the United States to be interrogated. They don't know that yet,"
' replied Attaché Darlington, pointing to some large sheds normally used to store small boats and dinghies. 'They've stayed longer than expected, waiting for your arrival so you can select those you need for the voyage.'

"Excellent," said Patrick, pausing to look at one of the documents showing the return route to the Norfolk base. It outlined the stages Patrick had already planned at that base. Everything was in order. "Do you have a list of all of them and their positions on the submarine?"

"Yes, Captain, here you are," Darlington said, opening a folder. "I thought you might need it."

Patrick smiled and took the document. Darlington continued, pointing to the pages.

"It contains the full name of every crew member, their age, place of origin and position on board.

"Excellent work, Attaché. I'm very grateful to you," said Patrick as he put the papers in his briefcase. "You'll then select those who are to accompany us to Norfolk. First we must inspect the submarine and identify any areas where we might have doubts about its operation. My men will help me decide what we need for the journey."

The group continued on its way, led by the Argentine officers. It was a cold day. Everyone had their duffle coats zipped up to the neck. Two lorries carrying Argentine midshipmen passed them going in the opposite direction. They saluted the group, who returned the salute. The harbour and the sea were clearly visible. They turned the corner of one of the buildings that faced directly out to sea. The submarine U-2193 lay before them.

Patrick's group stopped, stunned by the vessel before them. Bert Eklund put his hands to his head, letting out a whistle of admiration.

"It's sensational. We've got nothing like that in our fleet," exclaimed Stan White, one of the mechanics. "I want to see that submarine's engine. What do you reckon, Roger?"

The other mechanic shook his head, as if he'd seen a vision from another world.

"It looks spectacular. And it's huge."

The men continued with their comments of admiration.

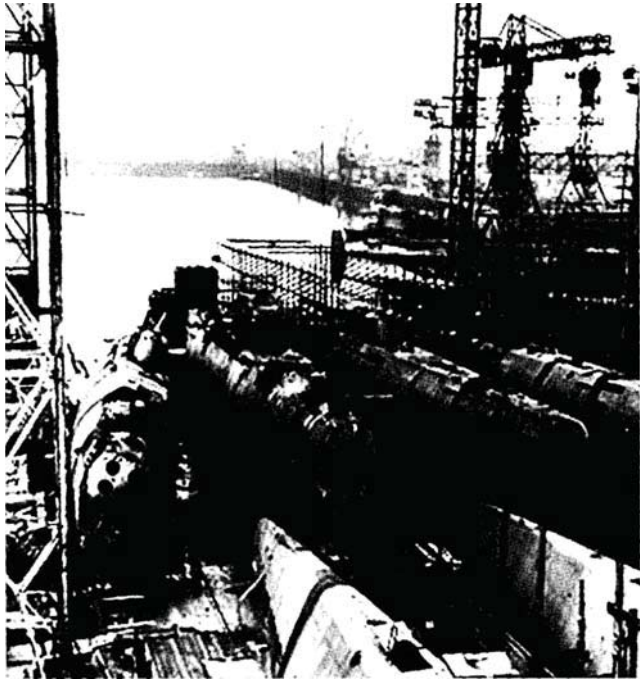
"What do you think, Captain Malone?" asked Attaché Darlington with a smile.

"All I can say is thank goodness the war is over and all these weapons were barely in use," he said, grabbing his briefcase firmly and leading the group towards the submarine. We wouldn't have stood much of a chance against vessels like that.

The American MPs were already on the submarine's deck, waiting for Patrick's group and on the alert for any eventuality. Seeing them arrive, they ordered the Argentine military police on guard at the port side to lower the access gangway so that the new arrivals could come on board. They had orders that the submarine's ramp should not be raised and to keep out onlookers or unauthorised personnel.

The immense conning tower was completely different from those found on submarines up to that point. Patrick studied every detail protruding from it in detail. It was very modern and very well designed. He thought that the hydrodynamic penetration coefficient must be excellent. The two anti-aircraft turrets at the bow and stern stood out. The hull protruding above the surface also looked very

well-designed, in keeping with the conning tower. The gangway swayed under the weight and the passage of the group, giving the impression that it was about to break, but it held firm. They were all on board now. The rucksacks were left on the guarded deck



A gunner at the end of the war, with several Type XXI submarines

After the customary introductions to the American MPs, they entered the submarine through the door on the side of the conning tower. The interior lighting was very good, allowing them to make out every detail. The red light that

was used in the periscope room when a combat alert was announced. Patrick stood next to the periscope and checked the technical specifications of the submarine contained in one of the reports he had received from the Attaché.

A total of 118 Type XXI submarines had been built at various shipyards since 1943. These were: Blohm & Voss in Hamburg from 1943 to 1945, Deschi Mag AG Weser in 1945, and F. Schichau in Danzig from 1943 to 1945. The first Type XXI submarine built and commissioned was designated U-2501. It weighed 1,819 tonnes, was 76.70 metres long and had a beam of 6.62 metres. The surface engines were two 2,000-horsepower MAN 4-stroke M6V 40/46 diesel engines, each with a V-configuration of 12 cylinders. When submerged, it was powered by two silent Walther hydrogen peroxide electric turbines, each with a power output of 2,500 horsepower (2-GU 365/30), and two secondary electric motors, each with a power output of 113 horsepower (GV 323/28). Its surface speed was 15.6 knots and 18.1 knots when submerged, with a range of 16,000 kilometres.

The torpedo room, equipped with six tubes, could carry 23 torpedoes two types: wire-guided or acoustic-guided. They were of the new LUT (Lageunabhängiger Torpedo) model, which had a *95%* success rate against targets over 60 metres in length – and without even needing to aim directly! There was another configuration comprising 17 torpedoes of both types and 12 mines. The armoured anti-aircraft turrets could be fitted with two calibres: four 20mm or 30mm guns. The U-21 submarine carried two sonar systems: the passive system known as the Gruppenhorchgerät and the active system known as the Unterwasser-Ortungsgerät NIBELUNG, which allowed it to attack surface targets without visual contact. It was equipped with a system to deceive surface vessels, called the Pillenwerfer, which ejected a substance that caused bubbles on the surface and confused enemy detection systems.

Its maximum depth was 250 metres. It could remain submerged for up to three days. The crew consisted of 58 men. It was equipped with air conditioning, refrigerators for provisions, three bathrooms and a water purification system, which undoubtedly improved the crew’s hygiene and comfort.



Detail of the snorkel on the Model XXI

All these specifications, Patrick thought, far surpassed those of his own submarines. In fact, he thought this was a genuine submarine and not a submersible like the so-called submarines that had operated during the war. Those were vessels capable of submerging, but not of remaining underwater for long. Model XXI, however, could. He put away the technical specifications sheet and continued the tour with his men.

Like all submarines, its walls were covered with pipes, controls, dials, levers, wing nuts, valves and components incomprehensible to a layman. It looked complex. Everything was painted against a light background so that any device or internal component could be easily seen. It didn't feel cramped, and it was easy to move about inside. That was a great advantage in normal life on board and, above all, in combat situations.

The periscope area housed the controls for raising and lowering the periscope itself, the snorkel and the external antennas. It was a space where, in combat, up to six people could be stationed. After descending from the conning tower into the submarine proper, Patrick's men looked with curiosity at the layout of the enormous submarine's internal components and continued to express their admiration for some of the solutions on board. The number of bathrooms, refrigerators and the air-conditioning system caught the visitors' attention.

"With all these amenities here, we really can put up a fight…" exclaimed Kenneth, Patrick's second-in-command.

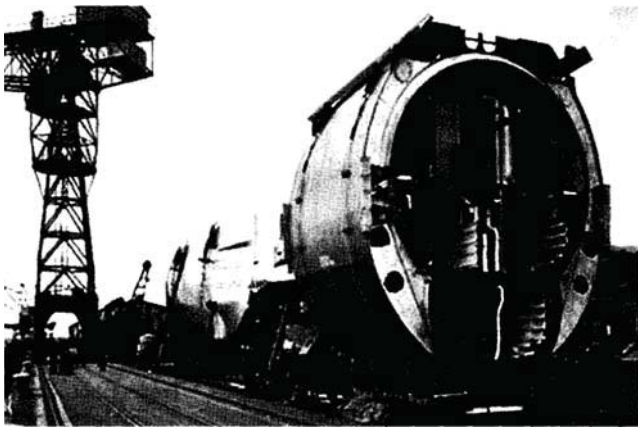
Everyone nodded in agreement. As they spoke, they reached the navigation table where the nautical charts lay neatly rolled up, numbered and sorted.

On the navigation console were several controls, including a clock with a 24-hour dial that caught Bert Eklund's eye; he pointed it out to his companions:

'With this clock, you can tell whether it's day or night at the bottom of the sea. Very interesting.

The depth rudder valves were very close by, and for a layman it was truly complicated to make sense of the apparent labyrinth that the whole mechanism represented. Stan and his colleague Roger Blaufen, the engineers, were sorting through

every piece of equipment that came into view. Blaufen's knowledge of German proved indispensable in all of this. Beneath the seats of the sailors operating the depth-rudder controls was a hatch containing an auxiliary motor for the depth gauges. The valves controlling the entire diving system looked like a Christmas tree, as they were painted green and red in a vertical arrangement. It was like a burst of colour inside the vessel. In fact, such colour-coding was standard practice to avoid visual confusion during moments of tension when the opening and closing valves had to be operated very quickly.



The XXI model was manufactured using a modular production process at various sites across Germany

The controls for the diving flaps seemed very user-friendly. The angle of inclination gauge was positioned directly in front of the sailor operating them, making it easy to submerge the vessel by tilting it to the required angle. Just to the left of this entire system were the controls for the electric motors and a tube for transmitting and receiving orders from the

bridge. The corridor stretched on, with no end in sight. The ship's internal dimensions continued to command everyone's attention.

The warm, wood-panelled corridor led them to the galley. It was the first time they had seen anything like it on a submarine. Not only was it more spacious than the American ones, but it also had state-of-the-art ceramic hobs – a far cry from the simple electric heating elements on their own submarines – and a cooker hood. It was something they hadn't even dared to dream of. More valves and pipes were visible above the extractor hood.

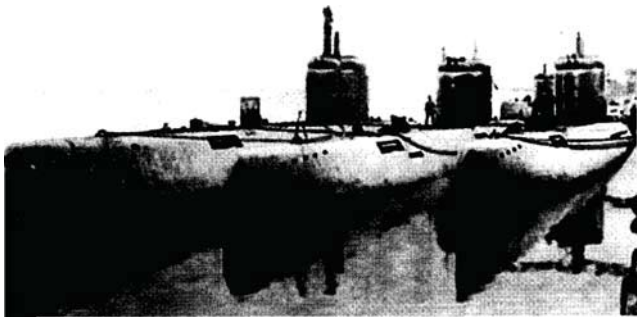


The powerful, modern turret of the Type XXI. You can see the two 30 mm guns at the bow. It was an exceptional design.

There was also an oxygen generator at one end of the galley, designed to refresh the air quickly. On one of the walls were two water filters capable of supplying drinking water continuously.

Continuing down the corridor, Patrick and his men came across a large valve on the ceiling with a sign reading ‘Dieselluft Kopfventil’ or ‘Diesel engine air supply valve’. There was no doubt that they were near the engine room. Beneath this valve was a hatch leading to the officers’ quarters and the engine room. Behind the hatch were two control panels on the wall indicating the status of the electric batteries. 124 blue and red lights appeared on each of these control panels. Each light represented a battery cell, so it was possible to see if there was a problem with any of them.

The cabins were comfortable and accommodated three officers in each, evidently working in shifts. Their walls were entirely panelled in wood. They were situated opposite one another, that is, on the port and starboard sides of the vessel. The sloping wall reflected the shape of the submarine’s hull. They continued on their way and arrived



Several Type XXI submarines in a port in Norway in 1945

to the powerful diesel engines. Once again, they marvelled at the width and ease of movement.

The two diesel engines, positioned side by side, allowed access via a corridor wider than that of a conventional submarine. At the far end, mounted on the ceiling, were two powerful compressors used to pump compressed air and drain water from the diving tanks.

“Have you seen that, Roger?” said Roger Blaufen, the other American mechanic and Stan’s colleague. “It’s got a carbon dioxide absorption system for the air. Very ingenious.”

Roger was counting the lime containers throughout the system, making a total of eighteen.

Beneath them was the enormous round hatch leading to the vessel’s electric turbines. It was one of the peculiar features of this submarine, and one the American sailors were unaware of. They made their way into the turbine room with undisguised curiosity. Right at the entrance were the controls for the diesel tanks, with gauges showing the number of litres in the submarine’s two tanks

“We’ll need the German turbine specialists, Patrick,” suggested Stan White, the mechanic, standing in front of the enormous electric turbines situated behind the diesel engines. “Roger and I aren’t very familiar with how they work.”

The turbines appeared to be operated by two large metal compartments, each with a control wheel protruding from it. A chair topped each unit as well, where the operator sat. Various controls and indicators were distributed across the front panel. Their complexity was not merely apparent.

“No problem, Stan. We’ll take them with us to Norfolk.” Patrick ticked off the names of two mechanics on the German crew list who, according to the list, were in charge of the turbines.

As might be expected, in the electric turbine room, a large proportion of the pipes and valves had been replaced by extensive electrical wiring. An emergency ladder in the middle of the corridor allowed access to the submarine’s outer deck. The silent electric motors were on full display

right next to that escape ladder. The sturdy propeller shafts were clearly visible at the bottom of the engines. Between the two engines, a ladder led down to the lower deck and to a new hatch, which led to the rudder motor room at the stern of the submarine.

The shape of the vessel's hull indicated that they had reached the very end, the rudder room. A large steering wheel dominated the room. If the engine failed, the rudder was operated manually via that steering wheel. The rudder shaft was of considerable diameter, and turning it by hand would have required great effort despite the leverage provided by the steering wheel's generous diameter.



The sleek silhouette of the XXI model stood in stark contrast to the outdated designs of the submarines of the time. In fact, it was a genuine submarine, not merely a vessel capable of underwater for short periods.

On their way back, intending to make their way through the submarine to the torpedo room in the bow, they climbed up to an area above the steering compartment which led directly back to the electric turbine room. In that area there was a fully equipped dance room, and an isolated chamber from which the navy's so-called 'Kampfschwimmer' or frogmen could be launched. It was also from this chamber that countermeasures were carried out to simulate that the submarine had been sunk, known as 'Pillenwerfer'. The Type XXI was the first to install it

up until then, it had been carried out via the torpedo tubes.

They left the engine room and once again passed through the corridor officers' quarters, where wood was the predominant material. Several continuously lit lanterns were strategically placed throughout this area. The officers' table appeared unfolded and clean. Not far from there, the radio room was in perfect order and the modern equipment caught the group's attention. A four-wheel 'ENIGMA' machine for coded messages sat on the table.

'That cipher machine doesn't make much sense now. The Kriegsmarine no longer exists,' Patrick ran his hand over the keyboard. 'That machine cost many lives at sea, until the British captured one and worked out how it operated. Let's move on.'

The ENIGMA machine before them had been one of the major obstacles to deciphering their messages. It had been introduced into the German navy in the 1920s and consisted of 5 cipher wheels. However, its system was easily cracked, as the Poles had acquired a similar machine that was commercially available in Germany at the time. In 1931, the German navy switched to the ENIGMA manufactured by 'Heimsoeth und Rinke', which was used until the end of the war, with obvious improvements made throughout that period. The Poles remained keen to decipher the new machine and so set three mathematicians—Zygalsky, Rozeki and Rejewski—to work on it. Marian Rejewski developed mathematical theories about the machine and, with the help of material obtained through espionage, they managed to build a replica, enabling them to read the Kriegsmarine's coded messages for several years. All this was set against the backdrop of the deep differences between the Poles and the Germans before the war and the need to detect even the slightest military movement. In 1937, following the introduction of a new coding system devised by the Germans, the Poles passed all their material to the British, who continued the decryption work. Two British mathematicians from Bletchley Park, Turing and Peter Twinn, set to work immediately and by the end of 1959 had discovered the new German encryption method and its naval application.

In February 1942, the new 4-rotor ENIGMA machine appeared, offering more possible combinations than its predecessors, which made the task considerably more difficult. The capture by the British of the code books on board the submarine U-559 in October 1942 facilitated the decryption work. Each branch of the armed forces used its own ENIGMA machine with its specific encryption systems. The strangest of them all was the one used by the German secret service, the Abwehr, with the G312 code. The TYPEX (British) and M-135-C (American) encryption machines were always inferior to the German model.

The tour continued, and alongside the second communications room, the sonar room also appeared to be in good order. John 'Bullet' examined it closely, as both the radio *and* the sonar were his speciality on board. The operator's headphones lay on the workbench and several notebooks with notes were in their place. Patrick leafed through them. The crew's sleeping quarters consisted of numerous three-tiered bunks where the sailors took turns during their off-duty hours. John "Bullet" lay back on one of the bunks.

"They're just as uncomfortable as ours!" he exclaimed with certainty.

Once again they passed an emergency ladder that was
was situated in the passageway leading to the bow. Submarine XXI, like the others, had hatches on its deck and those located in the conning tower.

Once at the bow, the six main torpedo tubes were arranged in two vertical rows of three. The hatches of the tubes were open and they appeared to be empty of torpedoes. Two of them were equipped to be used as mine launchers. Between the tubes, one could also see bunks where the torpedo operators slept during the voyage. It was not surprising; they did the same on their own submarines.

"What do you think of this submarine, Kenneth?" Patrick addressed his second-in-command. "Can we take it to Norfolk without any problems? Personally, I think so."

'I think so too, Patrick,' Kenneth looked around him. 'Apart from a few technical aspects, and above all the



An ENIGMA machine used by the Kriegsmarine

turbines, I don't see any further problems. Fortunately, we won't have to engage in combat. It will almost be a pleasure cruise!" he smiled.

Patrick smiled too.

"True! Let's carry on."

Only three torpedoes remained on the submarine, but they were the most modern models. All were fitted with acoustic guidance, enabling them to track their target even if fired from a different direction, without needing to be aimed directly at the enemy vessel. They gleamed brightly, as they were coated in oil to allow them to slide easily through the launch tube. The group handled them with almost religious reverence. They had never seen anything like it.

The torpedoes were suspended from brackets that allowed them to be loaded extremely quickly, unlike on conventional submarines. In fact, all six tubes could be loaded in under ten minutes, an operation that on any

other submarine would have taken twice as long. And that made a huge difference in combat.

"You can see what sort of vessel this is," Patrick told them on the bridge, where they had returned after visiting the bow section. "As for the Germans, we'll need their two electric turbine technicians and someone else for the bridge area. The rest of the submarine is quite similar to ours, and it shouldn't be a problem to navigate it to Norfolk. I think three or four of them will be enough. Let's get out of here."

Patrick climbed up the ladder and made his way to the turret. He waited for the rest of the group.

The access hatch was open and the American MPs were waiting outside. As they stepped out, a breath of fresh air greeted them, which was much to everyone's delight. Although the submarine they had visited was empty, it was still an enclosed vessel and therefore had no draught inside. The internal ventilation and air conditioning were not in operation whilst it was moored at the port, although it was something that could be done.

"The air conditioning is the best feature of this submarine. I have no doubt about it."

John 'Bullet' Creighton was in no doubt. The heat on board a submarine in operation was a crew member's worst nightmare. Sweat dehydrated the men very easily, and the ever-present damp atmosphere on board made a submariner's work extremely uncomfortable. Air conditioning solved those serious problems. The others agreed.

"I don't even want to imagine those latest-model acoustic torpedoes from two or three years ago," Kenneth Miele looked concerned. "They would have wiped out our convoys in no time. Thank goodness it's all over."

Chapter 4

JOURNEY

"Let's go and *meet* the Germans," said Patrick to Kenneth. "I need you and Blaufen in particular to translate my words so there are no misinterpretation of what I say.

Blaufen, standing beside them, nodded in agreement.

The whole group descended the gangway to the deck in front of the immense submarine.

"Attaché Darlington," Patrick addressed the official from his embassy. "I wish to see the submarine's captain and his men. I need to meet and select the German crew who will be accompanying us."

"No problem, Captain Malone," Darlington replied obligingly. "Follow me."

He spoke briefly with the Argentine officers, who nodded immediately. The whole group set off towards the large barracks they had passed earlier on their way to the submarine.

At Gate Two, American MPs and two Argentine midshipmen were standing guard. When the group reached the gate, they opened it without asking the new arrivals for their papers. Patrick was surprised by the laxity of the guard. Inside the barracks, the temperature was pleasant. The men inside were engaged in various tasks, but above all, resting. There was general surprise when they entered. All the

Germans sprang to their feet as if struck by an electric shock and stood to attention, waiting for the whole group to reach them. Many wore the swordfish, the symbol of the Atlantic Flotilla, on their caps. Despite their youth, their experience was evident.

After passing between two rows of tables, where the prisoners were eating or passing the time reading, they reached the area with the bunk beds. The atmosphere did not feel hostile, even though the Germans outnumbered them. They wore their uniforms, insignia and medals, which the Americans observed with curiosity. An officer advanced towards them, pushing his way through his men, and stopped in front of Patrick.

'I am Captain Lippsmacher, in command of the submarine U-2195,' he said, raising two fingers to his white officer's cap. 'How can I help you, Captain?

He held out his hand and Patrick shook it without hesitation. The German captain's English was more than passable. The Iron Cross around his neck gleamed, the swastika in its centre standing out clearly.

For a moment Patrick stared intently at the coveted German medal, then introduced himself:

"I am Submarine Captain Patrick Malone and I have orders to take your vessel to the base at Norfolk, Virginia. I will need some of your men."

Lippsmacher looked somewhat surprised.

'I understand that all of us will remain in Argentina until we are released and can return to Germany with our families. It may be a matter of a few more months. We are in a neutral country.'

Patrick looked at Attaché Darlington. He looked back at the German.

—The situation is different, Captain Lippsmacher. You have turned up months after the end of the war without a clear explanation and with a very modern, next-generation submarine. You will understand that our government has some doubts; you and your men must provide us with a satisfactory explanation. Those who do not come with us now will be flown to the United States in a couple of days.

—We cannot be considered prisoners of the Americans. We are in Argentina.

Lippsmacher looked at his men, who nodded in agreement with their superior's words.

'You and your men are in no position to consider anything. You have lost the war and must account for your movements up to now." Patrick stared intently at the German, who held his gaze defiantly. "Argentina has handed over other German crews to our government who have turned up since the war ended. I suppose you are familiar with Captain Wermouth of U-530 and Captain Schaeffer of U-977..."

'Of course I know them, Captain Malone. We submariners of the Kriegsmarine are one family," interrupted Lippsmacher.

"Well, you'll be pleased to know that they, their crews and their submarines are in the United States after surrendering to Argentina, just as you will be," Patrick said, looking at the group of German sailors who were following the conversation with interest and anxiety. The German captain seemed unaware of the fate of his comrades. 'I believe you've got the better of me, and as we are all men of the sea, allow me to carry out my mission with the greatest of ease. We may well meet again in Norfolk.'

After a few seconds of silence, the German spoke again:

"Appealing to the fact that, as you say, we are seamen, allow me to speak to my men, Captain Malone," requested Lippsmacher. "It will only take a few minutes."

"All right," said Patrick, glancing at his group, who nodded in agreement. They moved towards the door, whilst the Germans gathered around their captain.

"I don't like this, Patrick," Kenneth said discreetly. "Let's keep our eyes peeled."

Patrick discreetly drew his Reglamentary pistol; his men followed suit. The tension that had arisen when the two groups separated was palpable. Suddenly, a sharp crack rang out. Everyone rushed towards the German group. Captain Lippsmacher lay sprawled on the ground. A pool of blood surrounded his head. He was dead. A trickle of blood ran from the corner of his mouth. His hands still clutched a Luger pistol tightly. The gate guard entered immediately and

stopped beside Patrick, staring at the German officer's lifeless body. They aimed their weapons at the German group.

"How is that possible?" exclaimed Patrick, pointing at the body and looking at everyone—especially the Attaché and the Argentine officers accompanying them. "This man was armed!"
Who gave him his weapon?

Patrick was beside himself. He needed that
man. Now it was impossible.

"Are there any more weapons here?" he asked the Germans furiously. Kenneth translated those words so there would be no doubt. The German group shook their heads. Kenneth took the Luger pistol from Lippsmacher's hand. A silver eagle and the swastika on the sides of the pistol gleamed brightly. He removed the bullets from the magazine and put it away carefully, wrapping it in a handkerchief.

A German officer addressed Patrick in impeccable English.

'Captain Malone, I am U-boat officer Wolfgang Reith, second-in-command of U-2195. Captain Lippsmacher has taken his own life because he believed we would be released in Argentina. He felt he had failed in his mission and had placed our lives in the hands of the enemy. His honour as an officer would not allow him to go on living. You must understand.'

'What you're saying is absurd, Reith. There are no enemies anymore. The war is over,' replied Patrick. 'No one should commit suicide over something like that. It's a stupid, senseless thing to do.'

"Not for us, Captain. Not for us," repeated Reith. "Our sense of military duty is very different from yours."

Patrick realised he couldn't keep arguing with someone who thought that way. He turned and addressed Attaché Darlington, who was looking at him helplessly.

'I want to speak to you, Darlington. Now.' Patrick led
him some distance away from everyone else.

"Darlington, I want an explanation of what has just happened here. You will understand that I am going to prepare a report for Vice-Admiral Clark. Someone has supplied that man with his service weapon. We needed him alive. There is collusion with the prisoners here. Although technically we are not at war, they may still be our enemies."

"I can't tell you anything," Darlington stammered. "This is a very serious matter, but here we observe all military protocol with prisoners. I can't understand what has happened. I'm sorry, Captain Malone."

'Don't tell me you're sorry. You're a soldier,' Patrick stared at Darlington. 'Weren't you aware that we entered this barracks without the guard asking for our papers? We could have been anyone. We could have been Germans in disguise. We could have caused a bloodbath on this base.'

Can you imagine that?

Darlington didn't know where to turn. It was very difficult to answer such questions. He saw himself in Washington trying to deal with this situation. He was in a difficult position. His comfortable life in Buenos Aires seemed to be coming to an end.

'On the other hand, Darlington,' Patrick continued, 'Lippsmacher and his men were unaware that they were American prisoners and that they were merely passing through here. Why weren't they told? This might have been avoided if they'd been informed of their final destination from the outset.'

He returned to his men.

—Kenneth, he looked at his second-in-command, according to the list we need the engineer officers Gerd Kastler and Peter Krüger on board to assist Stan and Roger in the engine rooms. We will also need two officers on the bridge. One will be Wolfgang Reith and the other Georg Böse.

Kenneth called out the names of those mentioned, who stepped out of the group and lined up in front of the Americans.

"And finally, the communications officer for the sonar and radio team, Georg Krämer, who will assist 'Bullet'. No one else."

—Patrick put the list away in the folder Darlington had given him at the start of the visit to the Argentine base.

"Attaché Darlington," he said, looking back at the frightened military attaché, "the submarine must be ready to set sail tomorrow morning at 6.00 am. Make sure everything is ready on board—fuel, food, and so on. Get in touch with Bert Eklund, who is my controller. He has everything we need ready and will oversee the delivery of the supplies. We'll be sleeping

on board. Tomorrow at 4.00 am, the selected German sailors must be taken to the submarine."

"Very well, Captain Malone. We'll set off immediately

.

Darlington called the Argentine officers to begin all the formalities for handing over the vessel and everything necessary for the voyage.

"Let's go, lads," Patrick said as he left the barrack-warehouse.

They headed straight back to the submarine. Once on board, they stowed all their rucksacks and travel bags in the spaces they had chosen in the officers' quarters. The beds were somewhat more comfortable and the space was larger.

Patrick drafted a report which was sent by teletype to Norfolk, for the attention of Vice-Admiral Clark.

"I can't believe something like this has happened, Kenneth. 'What sort of people do we have here?' lamented Patrick. 'The information that captain could have given us was vital for trying to find out what's happening in the southern hemisphere and the activity of German submarines in the area.'

Kenneth, being more practical, tried to calm Patrick down.

"He was an important figure, no doubt, but we still have his second-in-command, Wolfgang Reith. I'm sure he can answer our questions just as well as his captain. In the Kriegsmarine, second-in-commands had access to classified information. It was standard practice."

Patrick smiled:

"You're right. We can try to get something out of him during the voyage."

As planned, and after receiving the supplies and the selected German sailors, the submarine departed from the Argentine military base on schedule. Two Argentine Navy destroyers escorted the submarine until it left territorial waters. Curiously, the Germans seemed pleased about their trip to the United States and took part in the work on board and technical explanations about the submarine.

The Model XXI was a sensational boat to sail in, very comfortable and fast. It was a cold day, but splendid, and the horizon was clear. From the bridge of the turret, Patrick, Kenneth and Bert

watched the bow as it cut through the sea, advancing with great confidence. They were accompanied by Wolfgang Reith.

'What do you think, Captain Malone?' Reith asked with a smile.

'It's a magnificent vessel, to be honest,' replied Patrick. 'It's completely different from our submarines. It was lucky for us that you didn't have this model until the end of the war.

"In Germany, we know how to build submarines," said Reith confidently. "This model is the first in a completely different series, almost indestructible to conventional anti-submarine weapons... but as you say: it's all over!"

The voyage continued without a hitch. They had already left the Southern Cone behind and were beginning to enter Caribbean waters. The outside temperature was sweltering. Inside the vessel, the air conditioning was a godsend, so the atmosphere was relaxed and free from the tension caused by the heat.

Patrick's rapport with Reith grew stronger by the day. This situation began to bear fruit. The German felt at ease with him and his American comrades. The rest of the Germans also got on well with the others, despite the close scrutiny they were under from the military police accompanying them on board.

The information they had been given about the submarine and how it operated exceeded their expectations. The Germans seemed to feel better explaining all that. Perhaps it served as a form of group therapy, as Bert Eklund put it. Or it could be that they were all submariners and that created a certain affinity, as John 'Bullet' said. In any case, and on certain issues, the differences between the Germans and the Americans were striking. Patrick became genuinely angry with Reith, due to their radically opposing ways of thinking.

"I'm sorry to hear of Captain Lippsmacher's death," said Patrick to Reith, finishing his cup of coffee during one of the breaks in the officers' mess. "I think he made a mistake in taking his own life. There was no need for it."

Reith stared into his cup, as if deep in thought.

'I too was deeply saddened by it. We'd been comrades since the naval academy in Kiel, and I know he was an excellen-

officer and a friend to all. It was his decision and I must respect it.

Patrick disagreed.

'I already said at the base that I think it was stupid, and talking about codes of honour at this stage seems like nonsense to me. He owed it to his men, and in a way he let them down.'

'I can understand why you see it that way, given your practical American mindset and the sort of upbringing you've had,' Reith seemed to understand the American way of life. 'We are different from you in almost every respect. We are brought up to be disciplined and to serve the community. For us, death in combat or for honour is not a problem; it is something we accept without question. It is part of our way of life. I don't know the statistics, but I have no doubt that the number of casualties among German officers far exceeds that of the Allies. We stand with our men on the front line and fight shoulder to shoulder with every one of them. History will remember many German military names and very few of the Allies. It is the price we are willing to pay.

"I don't want to continue this discussion," Patrick hated that way of thinking. "I've tried to be considerate following the death of your captain, but I have no intention of listening to the sort of things you're saying. It's a way of thinking that has brought much misery upon the world. Our world must be a pleasant place to live and to develop as human beings, in a world without borders and, if possible, without wars."

"I'm glad you think that way, Captain Malone," Reith pressed on. "But that is indeed a fantasy. Empires have always been built through war, not dialogue. Violence is as intrinsic to human nature as kindness and other virtues. And we cannot change that. The American empire is based on violence and provocation; we know that all too well in Germany."

He looked intently at Patrick, who was listening very attentively, and continued:

—Don't you remember that your involvement in wars
has always been motivated by some ulterior motive? Against Spain and the sinking of the Maine in Cuba with a bomb planted by you yourselves. Against us in the First World War and the sinking of the

Lusitania when we all knew that, as well as carrying civilians, that liner was carrying weapons and soldiers. You put it there so that we would sink it! —Patrick leaned back on his bench, straightening his back and shaking his head. —And what about Pearl Harbour, Captain Malone! No one can believe that you didn't know about it. You strangled Japan with economic measures before the war, which provoked their attack and gave you the excuse... The United States is a country designed and structured for war. That is its real business.

"I don't like it, and I won't let you talk about my country like that. As for those wars you mention, Reith," Patrick sat up, "not only have we won them all, but our way of life is what everyone else wants." We were forced into those conflicts and we were always certain we would win. I believe that your position and what Germany has done to the rest of the world do not allow you to speak like that, with such frivolity. You are guilty of countless violations of human dignity and the individual,' Patrick reached the cabin door. 'I'm going up to the bridge now. I need some fresh air.'

Reith looked as though he had struck a nerve with Patrick, but did not continue the conversation.

As he climbed the submarine's tower, his mind recalled his grandfather's words regarding the Lusitania, which Reith had mentioned. His grandfather, John Philip Malone, had been one of US President Woodrow Wilson's advisers from 1913 to 1921, working on the team of Edward Mandell House, known as 'Colonel House'. When his grandson Patrick enlisted in the navy, he told him: 'I cannot stop you from joining the military, but remember that we must provoke wars if we are to have a presence and strength throughout the world. We must create a new world order, where other countries follow our lead, and our system is that of arms. You may find yourself fighting in a war you do not understand from your combat post, but you can be sure that the United States does need that war. During the First World War, the Lusitania was our excuse. Take care of yourself." He never forgot those words.

The British ocean liner Lusitania, whilst en route from New York to England, was sunk by a German submarine on 7

May 1915, in Irish waters. Among the 1,198 people who died were 128 Americans, including the multimillionaire Vanderbilt. This sparked anti-German sentiment that forced the United States to enter the European conflict. In addition to its civilian cargo, the Lusitania was carrying 600 tonnes of gunpowder, six million bullets, 1,248 boxes of mortar grenades, thousands of artillery shells and other war materials. It was a veritable floating powder keg. Consequently, it sank in just 18 minutes after being hit by a single torpedo. Its cargo exploded, accelerating the ship's rapid sinking. President Wilson ordered the original inventory of the Lusitania, which listed all that armament, to be hidden away in the Treasury archives.

The British had decoded the secret German naval codes and knew the areas where enemy submarines were operating near the British Isles. According to Commander Joseph Kenworthy, who was then a member of British Naval Intelligence, the Lusitania was deliberately sent into the area where the German submarines were operating, at reduced speed and without any escort. Germany had placed advertisements in the American press with the intention of dissuading potential passengers from boarding any civilian vessel entering war-torn waters, and its mission was to prevent supplies from reaching England. The published notices read: "Attention! TRAVELLERS intending to embark on transatlantic voyages are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and its allies and Great Britain and its allies; that the war zone includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that according to an official warning from the government of Imperial Germany, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain or any of its allies are military targets in those waters; and that travellers journeying through the war zone on British or allied ships do so at their own risk."

Woodrow Wilson was re-elected President of the United States in 1916 under the slogan 'He kept us out of the war'. It was a short-lived slogan, as the sinking of the Lusitania led to America's entry into a war that had previously been unpopular with the American people, but which was necessary for the American ruling class.

Patrick pushed these thoughts aside and strode purposefully towards the ladder leading into the turret and

from there he climbed up to the outer bridge. The breeze was very gentle. Bert and Kenneth were stationed there with their binoculars, scanning the horizon. Georg Böse was with them. He stood to attention as Patrick appeared.

"Hello, boss," smiled Bert, though he quickly realised that something was wrong with Patrick. "What's the matter?"

"Talking to Reith is like talking to a brick wall. It's really difficult to get close to him and have a normal conversation. I don't think he'll be much help in finding out more about this submarine and its last mission. How are things round here? Any news?"

Böse looked as though he didn't understand a word of

English. Kenneth put out his cigarette.

"Not at the moment. We're 160 miles east of Cuba and still sailing smoothly. We'll pass between the Bahamas and Florida —he glanced at Böse—. Don't worry about the German. You know he understands hardly anything we say.

Patrick nodded at Kenneth's last remark.

"We've been radioed from Norfolk that a storm front is approaching off Key West. And it's coming in strong, with winds of over 130 kilometres per hour," Bert interjected.

"When will we be in the area?" asked Patrick, though he'd already done the maths.

"Early this morning, around 4.00 AM," replied Bert. "I think it'll be best if we cross the storm underwater."

"OK," said Patrick, picking up a pair of binoculars and scanning the horizon with a grave expression.

Dinner passed peacefully. The ship's galley offered a range of culinary possibilities unheard of on Allied vessels and produced hardly any smoke. It was also true, as John 'Bullet' recalled, that it was almost a pleasure cruise, where they could work in peace; there was none of the tension of combat. By dawn, and fully submerged, they passed beneath the storm that had been forecast from Norfolk. At a depth of nearly two hundred metres, there was absolutely no sign of it. The voyage was completely calm. Little by little, they surfaced to a depth of about ten metres.

Leaving the communications room, John "Bullet" went over to Patrick, who was looking at the seabed charts, next to

Kenneth Miele. They were German, but their accuracy was astonishing. How could the Germans have produced such a precise map of the seabed off the Bahamas and the Florida coast? When had they done it? The map was dated 1958, but they could not recall any German scientific or geological expeditions during those years. John's voice momentarily snapped them out of their doubts.

'We've been informed from Norfolk that the Navy is conducting manoeuvres off the coast of Florida, opposite East Central in Brevard.

"And?" Patrick looked up from the charts and glanced at John.

"They're asking us to move away so as not to interfere with their exercise. Twenty-five ships, three submarines and fifty aircraft are taking part. Here are the coordinates for the exercise. We're less than eighteen hours away from them."

John handed him a piece of paper bearing the Navy's seal. Patrick read the document. He stroked his chin slowly, thinking. He smiled.

"Let's get right in the middle of those ships!" Kenneth was smiling too.

"But Patrick, this is serious. We could end up at the bottom of the sea or facing a court-martial…" John "Bullet" was a risk-taker, but he knew full well that this was a very dangerous game for their military careers. They were tampering with a captured enemy vessel. Even though the war had only recently ended, this was a German submarine and emotions were still running high.

"Or we might come out unscathed. Don't worry. They'll never know we've been among them," he patted him on the back twice. "Let's see what this submarine's capable of."

John shook his head:

"You're in charge."

"For now, reply to this telegram and tell them we're moving away from the area they've indicated and that we'll reach Norfolk in three days. Now, let's all gather round—Germans included." John went into the communications room and set about replying, following Patrick's instructions.

Patrick returned to the nautical charts and, swapping them for those showing the Florida coast, began to plot the coordinates

that appeared in the document. Kenneth smiled; although he liked the idea, it put them under a certain amount of pressure. The journey had been far too pleasant, and they needed a bit of action. They soon had the area marked out on the chart. The entire motley crew was summoned over the internal PA system to be informed of the latest news. Soon they were all in the bridge. Miele would translate what Patrick was about to say into German.

"We have been informed that naval and air manoeuvres are taking place off the coast of Florida, and we have been asked to move away from that area so as not to interfere with the exercise."

—the group looked intently at Patrick—. We have two options: we can follow the instructions, or we can't. I've decided on a third option: we won't interfere, but we will pass between them without being detected. I want to find out the capabilities of this submarine and its silent propulsion system. I hope you all agree, as I need every one of you. I take full responsibility should we be detected. You have nothing to fear.

The crew replied in the affirmative. The German group thought this was excellent news. They were elated.

"I remind you that this is not a war mission and we must not attack anyone," Patrick said, seeing the Germans' enthusiastic reaction.

"I have complete confidence in you, Patrick. You know me, but, what if they attack us? What do we do? Will we be able to defend ourselves?" John "Bullet"'s questions echoed through the spacious control room. "Will we have to defend ourselves?"

"It won't happen, John," Patrick replied emphatically. "We won't have to defend ourselves, nor will we be detected. We need a bit of action; we're getting rusty in here."

John 'Bullet' knew that once the boss had got an idea into his head, it was practically impossible to change his mind.

The group seemed to accept these words without further discussion. Deep down, they all felt the same way. Patrick was right; they needed some action.

"Reith, Miele, change course to 3-5-7. We're going after them; here are the coordinates. In sixteen hours we should make contact with the target ships."

The submarine continued submerged with the sonar and detection systems set to maximum sensitivity. Propulsion was provided by its conventional diesel engines, ventilated via the snorkel, and the Walther turbines were ready for use once they were close to the target. The American engineers were ready, alongside their German colleagues, to operate the vessel using the turbines. Both Stan White and Roger Blaufen had learnt the operational secrets of this innovative propulsion system and, although they had carried out some minor tests during the voyage, they now had the opportunity to test its effectiveness in a real-world situation.

Patrick ordered the periscope to be raised. There was nothing out of the ordinary to be seen. The storm had been left behind in Key West, and only storm clouds were visible to the south. The winds were already very light at that latitude. To port, the Florida coast was visible, specifically the area north of Miami at dusk. The headlights of cars and the lights of houses could be made out. To starboard, the wake of a merchant ship could be seen several miles away. The periscope's zoom allowed the outline of the ship to be seen with some clarity.

"Nothing special," I said to Kenneth, who was noting down the incidents in the logbook.

"Fancy a coffee, Patrick?" Kenneth suggested.

"It wouldn't go amiss, and we've still got time. Come on."

They made their way to the galley, where there was always a coffee pot ready with fresh coffee at any time of day. Taking their coffees, they went to the small officers' mess and sat down. Kenneth stretched his long arms, looking weary. Patrick was tired too, but he didn't show it. He began to sip his coffee. All that could be heard was the faint hum of the diesel engines.

"I've got this for you," Kenneth said, placing something neatly wrapped in a white cloth on the table. Patrick looked at Kenneth in surprise and, with a grateful glance, began to unwrap it. Captain Lippsmacher's Luger pistol appeared before him. It was well oiled.

"You keep it, Patrick."

Without saying a word, Patrick removed the magazine and saw that it was loaded with 9mm Parabellum rounds. The silver eagle and swastika on the pistol's sides gleamed with

intensity. It was a gun custom-made for its owner. He put the magazine back in place.

"I can't accept it, Kenneth," Patrick said, placing the pistol on the table.

Kenneth seemed to have made up his mind.

"Then we'll throw it into the sea when we surface

...

Kenneth shook his head and, looking at the Luger, insisted:

"I think you should keep it. It might save you in a pinch. Who knows...?"

—This gun has killed a man right in front of me. I don't I don't find that funny at all.

"The gun itself hasn't killed anyone," Kenneth took the weapon in his hands. "Lippsmacher pulled the trigger because he wanted to. It's not this particular gun's fault. Everyone on board knows what a gun is designed for, and that's its job. I still believe you should have it."

Kenneth's reasoning was very Cartesian and based on cold logic.

Patrick took the pistol and pointed it fictitiously at a spot outside the officers' mess. It was perfectly balanced and fitted his hand perfectly. Then he placed it back on the table and began to wrap it up again.

"All right, Kenneth, you win. I'll keep it and we'll see what happens." What a mess this is going to get me into in the future. These swastikas are going to cause me problems.

Having said that, he unwrapped it again, wiped it down with a cloth and put his service Colt pistol back in his handbag, slipping the Luger into the leather holster on his belt. It fitted perfectly. With a smile, they finished their coffees and went about their routine on board.

It was already past midnight.

"Patrick, I'm picking up radio signals on a military frequency . It's them," said John "Bullet" from his station.

"I'm on my way," said Patrick. Although he had been resting, he seemed to have been waiting for this news and quickly made his way to John's communications room.

"How far away are they, John?" John looked at the radar screen and held up a notepad on which he was working on various

data—. Using trigonometry, I've calculated that they're about thirty-five miles from here and heading in our direction. Their estimated speed is twenty knots. Given our speed and theirs, we should have them in sight in just over an hour and a half.

—Excellent. Stay on the lookout and let me know of any any developments.

"No problem, boss," John returned to his screen and his headphones.

Back on the bridge and over the ship's PA system, Patrick gave his first instructions to the crew.

"Right then, everyone to their stations. Remember, the aim is to go unnoticed amongst them. We're not here to fight, nor to get into trouble."

He asked Kenneth to accompany him, left the bridge and headed for the engine room.

"You've already got us into trouble," Kenneth said to Patrick with a smile as they walked.

"You know me, Kenneth. I don't know why you're surprised."

They saluted the MP on duty at the engine room door and entered—

They went inside, where Stan and Roger, their mechanics, along with the Germans Gerd Kastler and Peter Krüger, gave them their final instructions. They then checked the controls and the installation. Everything looked in order. The batteries were fully charged, guaranteeing a sufficient power supply for the required duration. Everything was ready for connection. The Americans had learnt how the silent turbines worked and how to operate them; they would now be able to test them and see how effective they were in a real-world situation.

"No we haven' 've had and everything works well, Patrick. "We're awaiting your orders," said Stan White.

"OK, Stan. We'll stay submerged until we come across the ships. When we're about ten miles away, we'll switch to turbine power. I'll let you know. Come on, Kenneth."

The snorkel protruding above the surface supplied the air and exhaust that the powerful diesel engines required. The anti-radar coating covering it, known as Schornsteinfeger, prevented it from being detected by enemy radar. The submarine was protected by this paint across its entire hull, which gave it a significant advantage.

"All right, boss," replied the engineers. They returned to John 'Bullet's' room.

"Any news, John?" asked Patrick.

"We're getting closer, but everything's the same for now," he replied without taking his eyes off the screen and adjusting his earphones. "Twenty-eight miles away at the moment.

Let me know when we're down to eleven miles. We're heading to the bridge, Kenneth.

Once there, they returned to the nautical charts of the Florida coast, which also covered a large section of the sea and the manoeuvring area.

The radar showed they were forming a circle, and the most important ships must be at the *centre*. I don't know what the aim of the exercise is, but you and I have plenty of experience with drills like this. Judging by the positioning of the ships, it must be a *classic* exercise against submarine attacks.

Although he was listening to Patrick, Kenneth handled the compass and slide rule with ease.

Here we are now, so the point of contact with them will be at this depth — he marked a point equidistant between the submarine and the fleet.

Time was passing and the distance was getting shorter and shorter.

"Eleven miles, Patrick," John 'Bullet's' voice sounded *mechanically* mechanically over the bridge loudspeaker.

Patrick looked at Kenneth, who had been using the nautical chart to guide the submarine towards the target. A mark on the chart indicated that they were ten miles away.

Engines — Patrick requested over the microphone.

'Engines here, Patrick. Shall we engage?'

"Switch to turbines."

He turned to Bert Eklund, who, alongside Georg Böse, was operating the depth rudders.

"Bert, switch on the internal red combat lighting."

The entire interior of the bridge turned reddish, indicating that the operation was beginning and also making it easier to observe through the periscope.

The sound of the submarine's operation changed radically—

A strange silence filled the room. It was a strange feeling.

"Raise the periscope!" ordered Patrick.

After a slight whirring sound, the periscope rose until it was level with his eyes. Patrick opened the periscope's arms, put his cap on backwards and began to scan the night horizon. He scanned the dim light that precedes twilight with a hunter's keen attention. He adjusted the zoom to its maximum power and could just make out the columns of smoke from the ships, still a long way off. The periscope's digital display showed him the distance: 9.8 miles. The optical quality of that device and its ease of use were light years ahead of those carried on his submarines.

"I've located all three submarines, Patrick," said John 'Bullet' in a clear voice. "They're to port of the whole group and more than fifteen miles from our position. Judging by their movements, they seem to be operating like German wolf packs."

Patrick took the microphone:

"That's good for us. They're below our rendezvous point. Keep monitoring them and keep me informed."

The view through the periscope had changed significantly, and the ships were now clearly visible with the naked eye. Patrick invited Kenneth to observe the fleet as well. A destroyer had its bow directly in front of the German submarine and was heading full speed in its direction. It appeared to have detected them.

'Depth, twenty metres,' ordered Patrick.

The destroyer was closely followed by two corvettes belching thick plumes of smoke from their funnels. They formed a dense screen to conceal the rest of the fleet, which was following behind them. To port and starboard, though at a greater distance, other ships of various types were coming into view, also making good headway.

"Sonar, give me their position," John's voice sounded metallic. "They're three and a half miles from us. In twelve minutes we'll be within torpedo range."

Patrick made his way to the communications room, where John was deftly operating the detection instruments. Georg Krämer was helping to adjust the equipment.

"You can hear the propellers perfectly. It seems we've got them directly above us.

The sensitivity of the German equipment was far superior to that carried by their submarines. Patrick returned to the bridge.

They were getting closer and closer, and the group didn't seem to notice the submarine's presence.

"Raise the periscope!"

"But, Patrick..." Kenneth tried to warn him.

"Raise the periscope!" he repeated, hoping it would appear before him.

A whirring sound indicated that the optical device was now in position before him. He extended the periscope's arms and began a circular scan.

—John, bearing!

"Two hundred and ninety-six," replied John 'Bullet' quickly, with a touch of nervousness.

"Range?" ordered Patrick again.

"Two thousand seven hundred yards!"

The ships were almost upon the submarine. The noise was deafening in John's equipment.

"Patrick, one of the submarines has broken away from the hunting group..." John warned.

"Lower the periscope," Patrick turned to Bert Eklund.

"Depth, thirty metres, Bert. Pitch angle, five degrees to starboard. Quickly!"

The periscope disappeared and the submarine began an escape manoeuvre, listing slightly to starboard.

"Propellers at 1-7-0," roared Bert as he manipulated the depth gauge controls.

The sound of the ships could already be heard above them through the hull itself. In what seemed like an eternity, they passed over the U-2193, with nothing to report but a spine-chilling noise, like the roll of hundreds of drums. They hadn't been detected.

"What's the bearing of the central group?" Patrick was hunched over the nautical chart.

Kenneth worked it out trigonometrically, multiplying the distance by the sine of the angle of inclination. He was using a slide rule.

"Five hundred and fifty yards, Patrick!"

“Too close, but keep the bow pointed towards the central group’s course. We’ll stay thirty metres away, Bert.” Patrick quickly worked out what that information meant in real time.

The central group will reach them in six minutes. Two battleships and an aircraft carrier, followed by two supply tankers, three more destroyers and five corvettes, make up the group, which is advancing very quickly towards them. Wolfgang Reith observed the situation, helping Kenneth with the calculations and the navigation charts.

The thoughts flashed through Patrick’s mind, and in a split second, glancing at Kenneth, he ordered:

‘Hard to port. Steer ninety, Bert. Let’s get out of their wake. John, bearing!’

“One hundred and sixty-one, Patrick.”

“Range?”

“One thousand one hundred. Watch out, Patrick, two destroyers are heading towards us. They’ve broken formation and are coming at full speed!”

The destroyers’ propellers sounded *like* a muffled drumbeat, growing ever closer. The sound of the propellers began to resemble a train and was truly impressive.

—Just a moment...

John looked at Patrick, who had just appeared in the communications room.

“I’ve detected a submarine on our course, heading for the destroyers’ rendezvous point. It’s the one I saw earlier. It’s circled round and entered the centre of the group, *just like* us, and is on our course.”

The American submarine was barely two miles away from them. It seemed to be moving fast. Patrick was staring at the screen.

—(Could it be that the destroyers have spotted that submarine and not us?

—It’s possible. I’ve thought the same thing, too, replied John without taking his eyes off the screen. It showed a sudden evasive manoeuvre by the American submarine towards starboard, as if fleeing from its pursuers. It had abandoned the U-2193’s course.

—They’ve got it on their radar,’ John said.

The destroyers, less than a mile from U-2195, launched sonar detection charges to pick up the American submarine that was theoretically attacking them.

"Heeling angle forty-five degrees to port," ordered Patrick. 'Let's go deeper, Bert. Take us down to 150 metres.'

Gently and without the slightest sound, the submarine slipped into the depths with ease, vanishing from view of the surface vessels. The depth gauge, or Tieffenmesser, clearly marked the metres they were gaining as they descended towards the seabed. The detection charges appeared to have no effect on the German submarine, nor was the American submarine able to detect them. The anti-radar coating and silent turbines were revolutionary. From this model onwards, submarines would never be the same again. It was a new form of underwater warfare.

Back on the bridge, Patrick gave new orders.

"We'll stay at this depth and get out of here. Heading Norfolk. We've had enough of this.

Kenneth, with the lights back to normal on the bridge, breathed a sigh of relief. John seemed calmer too.

"Are you happy now, Patrick?" Kenneth seemed to reproach him, though Patrick knew him well and realised that wasn't the case.

"I don't think a good submariner could pass up an opportunity like this. It's an exceptional vessel," Patrick leaned on the navigation table. "I have no doubt that in a real combat situation, with the full crew on board and the state-of-the-art torpedoes this submarine was carrying, we would have wiped out a good portion of that convoy. I'm absolutely certain of it, Kenneth."

Reith, standing beside Kenneth, nodded in agreement with Patrick's words. He, too, had no doubts about the Model XXI's offensive capabilities.

I'd like to congratulate you all —Patrick's words could be heard perfectly over the ship's PA system—. We've carried out a small drill simulating the approach and entry into a convoy, making the most of our journey to Norfolk, and it went perfectly, just as I'd hoped. I didn't want to take any further risks, nor was the aim to sink any ships. I thank you for your cooperation. Thank you.

Chapter 5

ARRIVAL IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

Since the last dialectical clash , Reith seemed

out of sorts. Therefore, as we neared Norfolk and following the recent ups and downs, Reith tried to mend our personal relationship. During one of the breaks in the officers' mess, Reith took advantage of the fact that they were alone to try to get closer to Patrick.

'Captain Malone, although several days have passed since our argument, as far as I'm concerned it's forgotten and I'd like to apologise for what I said. I let myself get carried away in the heat of the moment. You must understand the situation my men are in, and mine in particular, after everything that's happened.'

Patrick stared intently at the German and thought he saw an opportunity to discuss the matters of military interest to him.

"Don't worry, Reith. I appreciate your words. I've put it behind me too. We can all have a bad moment and say things that are inappropriate or out of place. Really, it's forgotten," he held out his hand, which Reith shook immediately. The German seemed to feel better after this conversation.

Captain Malone, I'd like to say that I really enjoyed the drill we went through after *finding* ourselves in the middle of some American air and naval manoeuvres. It was very exciting. It had been a long time since my men and I had experienced such a tense situation. This will surely be my last military mission.

Patrick nodded in agreement with the German's words.

I'm sure, Reith, although it's been fun and the submarine submarine has performed well.

The submarine was certainly impressive, but the game had been risky.

"Reith, I'd like to know something. What were you doing in Antarctica?" Patrick asked Reith directly.

"Our enemies were in every sea, Captain," replied the German with a smile. "And we had orders to patrol wherever necessary until we found them and sank them," he concluded with conviction.

"You know as well as I do that Antarctic waters are not, and never have been, a regular shipping route for anyone." Only whalers sail in polar waters," Patrick stared intently at Reith. "Sixteen of your submarines were sunk there during the war. We don't know how many more have operated in those waters, but I have no doubt there have been a great many," Patrick leaned back on the bench. "I just want to know what Germany could have been looking for or doing out there..."

It was just another battlefield, Captain Malone. Don't give it any more over it," the German wanted to be honest.

Patrick concluded:

—In 1938 there was a German expedition to Antarctica and it I seem to recall that he used a ship called the Schwabenland. Is that right?

I vaguely remember, but I was younger then and didn't pay much attention to all that. You also sent a mission to Antarctica under the command of Admiral Byrd.

Reith also leaned back on the bench, facing Patrick. Without answering the German, Patrick pressed the point again.

"I do remember, Reith, that you claimed a vast area and marked it out with stakes dropped from the air. You called it Neuschwabenland. What were you looking for there even back then?
What were you up to?"

"I see you know something of German history in Antarctica. Look, Captain Malone —Reith stood up and approached Patrick. He seemed to want to share a secret with him—I know that the war in the classical sense of the word is over and that you, the so-called Allies, have won. But I can also tell you that the Reich continues, in a way that is unthinkable to all of you. I guarantee it.

“What you’re telling me, Reith, is very serious. What exactly is this about?” Patrick’s face showed dismay at the news, though not surprise. This was beginning to tie in with what Vice-Admiral Clark had told him.

“What I’m telling you could cost me my life if it reaches the wrong ears. Believe me. I consider you a submariner like us. I’ve seen you at work on board and I know you’re a good officer and honest with your men.”

‘What else can you tell me? You’ll understand that I’m interested in this matter,” Patrick also moved closer to the German.

‘For us, Antarctica has been an area of the utmost interest before and during the war. Why, you may ask —Patrick nodded, listening with rapt attention to the explanation that was beginning.—Our scientists had already carried out research and knew for certain the vast amount of natural resources that area possessed. The Führer, in line with his policy of Lebensraum—or the search for the living space Germany required—had considered various parts of the world with potential for German expansion.

“But Antarctica is at the South Pole. It’s uninhabitable—who would want to live there?” Patrick couldn’t understand the reasoning behind the chosen location.

“Let me continue, Captain Malone,” Reith said with a smile, understanding Patrick’s doubts. “Although Germany had already secured historical territorial claims such as the Sudetenland, Bohemia and Moravia, parts of Prussia and the Danzig Corridor, the truth is that we did not know whether Russia would be an easy conquest. In fact, Russia was Germany’s natural sphere of expansion. Poland was a fictitious country, created by the plutocrats and international finance after the end of the First World War, largely by appropriating German and Austrian territory.

Reith continued:

—Certain areas of Africa were also considered, but these were ruled out due to the significant British presence and influence there. The Middle East was also considered, and there were even some operations in Syria and Iraq involving our KG-200 squadron and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. However, despite their apparent willingness to cooperate, the Arabs were not a particularly reliable partner for

us. Furthermore, Italy already had a certain presence there. That left only South America and the South Pole.

"And the North Pole?" asked Patrick.

"Unfeasible. Not only because it's practically just ice with no land beneath it, but also because our proximity to the Anglo-Saxon world meant we couldn't operate freely. There were a few reconnaissance missions, but the results weren't encouraging," Reith finished his cup of coffee. "That left us, therefore, with South America and Antarctica." In Argentina and Chile our social presence is very strong, and in Brazil there was even a highly secret German military contingent operating in that area.

Patrick could hardly believe the German's words.

Reith continued:

—Antarctica offered the peace and quiet we were looking for. Only Norway, Argentina and Chile laid claim to Antarctic territory, but without any real pressure. Our excellent relations with the two South American countries allowed us to carry out any project in the area without any problems. The relative proximity of South Africa was another advantage, as it too was a country sympathetic to our political regime. Britain and its Falkland Islands did not pose a problem, despite the fact that they had a sophisticated control system on those islands, as they lay much further north. Our scientists aboard the Schwabenland not only discovered many natural resources of all kinds, but also something they had already suspected: uranium. They also found warm areas, *like* oases, where life was possible. They also produced very precise maps of the land beneath the ice and the enormous underground caverns, warmed by geothermal activity, which linked the Antarctic continent with Chile and Argentina —Reith looked at Patrick—. What do you think?

"I find that incredible," replied Patrick, "though I still don't understand the reason for the constant submarine activity in the area."

'Well, that's not the worst of it,' smiled Reith. 'Germany has a military base in Antarctica: Base 211. That explains our constant movements, not only of submarines, but also of surface vessels and aircraft. Our submarines had natural hideouts, which allowed us

to repair and service our vessels without any problems. Base 211 has been a great help to us.

'And what has become of Base 211?' —to Patrick it sounded like a science-fiction story, but he continued to listen with interest.

"It's still operational," the German replied without hesitation.

"But what exactly does it do these days?" Patrick pressed on with the conversation, sensing it might lead somewhere. "The war is over; what's the point of a supposedly active German military base?"

—I don't know what projects they're currently working on, but I can tell you that Base 211 was involved in projects and challenges that continued after the end of the war. Our ships, aircraft and, above all, our submarines carried a vast amount of scientific equipment of all kinds, technical and military personnel, and thousands of Germans who were hoping for a new life within the new Antarctic Reich. There, they produce their own food and have supplies of every kind. In fact, they are self-sufficient.

'Who's in charge of all that? Hitler?' asked Patrick.

"The SS, Captain Malone. The Führer fell in Berlin. There have been many rumours, but he died in Berlin. I have no doubt about it. He would never have abandoned his post. Besides. . .

"Radio contact with Norfolk, Patrick," interrupted John 'Bullet'. "Vice-Admiral Clark's on the line and asking for you."

"We'll continue this later, Reith. This is more urgent right now," Patrick stood up and headed for the communications room. He put on his headphones.

"Captain Malone here, Vice-Admiral."

"Hello, Patrick," Clark's voice was cheerful. "When do you expect to arrive in Norfolk?"

"According to our calculations, we'll arrive tomorrow around 11:00 am. There have been no setbacks and everything is going well," Kenneth appeared at that moment in case Patrick needed any further information.

"Do you have any relevant information regarding what you and I discussed in my office? I'm very interested in it." Patrick was surprised by Clark's interest.

"I've found out something that I'll tell you in person. I can tell you now that it sounds like an incredible story. I don't think it's true."

"Patrick, prepare a written report for me on what you've learnt. Tell me about it first, and tomorrow afternoon we have a meeting with some other people, in front of whom I want you to speak. I can't tell you any more for now. See you at the base. See you tomorrow, soldier."

Patrick smiled.

"Very well. See you tomorrow, Vice-Admiral Clark."

He cut the communication and leaned back in John 'Bullet's' seat. Reith's story was beginning to sound plausible *to him*. When the 'bigwigs' needed something so urgently, it meant there was something behind it all. They didn't do things for no reason.

Right now, he needed Reith on the bridge with Kenneth to steer the submarine to Norfolk, and he needed time to prepare his report in private. So he shut himself away in his private cabin with his portable typewriter and began drafting the report.

Norfolk was already visible on the horizon. The submarine, travelling on the surface, left barely a wake in its wake. Two destroyers were leaving the base at that moment and crossed paths with the German vessel. They had clearly been warned of its presence and, using their powerful searchlights, sent a greeting, to which the submarine replied. The American flag was flying from the upper mast to avoid any incident. From the conning tower, alongside his comrades, Patrick found the situation strange, though on the other hand it pleased him and gave him a certain thrill. He knew he was entering the Norfolk dock in a spectacular submarine. In fact, a large crowd could already be seen waiting in the berthing area.

The American submarines stationed there not only looked outdated next to U-2193, but also very small. The vessel passed majestically in front of the countless military vessels of all kinds that were there. The crews were on deck, looking curiously at the enemy vessel and waving to the crew, who returned all those greetings. The submarine positioned itself

port-side to the berthing area and, in a clean and swift manoeuvre, was already moored to the jetty.

There were about fifty people gathered there, almost all of them naval officers of various ranks and sailors on shore duty for the docking operation. Vice-Admiral Clark, standing in the front row, smiled as he looked alternately at Patrick and the submarine. Everyone went down to the deck and stood to attention, waiting for Patrick to come on board with the Vice-Admiral and other officers for the customary greeting. Patrick accompanied the small entourage down the gangway; once on deck, they thanked each of the crew members for their presence there. The German crew, standing at the far end, remained at attention, in their uniforms and with their medals. Patrick had never for a moment considered it might be otherwise. These were men who had fought for their country, and it would have been demeaning to them to be given different clothing on board.

At first, the American delegation seemed taken aback by the visual impact of those men and their decorations, but Vice-Admiral Clark stepped forward and shook Reith's hand first, before moving on to the others. There were no further problems. It was not the time to make distinctions, as those men had cooperated fully throughout to ensure the submarine could now dock in Norfolk without incident. That was the end of the journey for the German group. They would now be placed under military jurisdiction at the base for interrogation, and in due course would likely return to Germany.

They all made their way down the gangway. Clark turned to Patrick.

"We need to meet now. I want each of your men to give me a report on their area of responsibility on the submarine and explain any new developments they've found on board from their own perspective and experience. I imagine we'll have to sort out a lot of things on our end… I need it by tomorrow."

Patrick gathered his men and informed them of Clark's decision. Once the bureaucratic process was over, they would enjoy a well-deserved rest with their families.

“Vincent, what’s going on? What are the Admiralty and the ‘bigwigs’ after?”

“You’ll find out everything today. A little patience, Patrick,” Clark replied. “A lot has happened since you left, and some very important decisions have been taken at the highest level. You can well imagine. Let’s go and have lunch with your people now, and then we’ll meet in my office before the meeting with the other military officers.”

“All right,” Patrick told his men, who welcomed the news. “Wait for me five minutes. I want to say goodbye to the Germans. They’ve worked very well with us and helped us every step of the way.”

The German group was being watched by the military police and they were all standing together, waiting for news. Patrick walked over to them.

“Gentlemen, I’d like to thank you all for your hard work on board. You’ll soon be reunited with your colleagues who were flown out earlier.”

He shook hands with each of them, and especially with Reith. Patrick’s other colleagues also joined in the farewell.

“We are submariners and always will be, Captain Malone,”
’ said Reith as he stood to attention and gave a military salute to the American group. His comrades followed suit. The Americans returned the salute. The small, improvised ceremony ended there. It was moving for everyone.

“Because I know you, Patrick, but that could be considered collusion with the enemy...” smiled Clark, as he began walking towards the base canteen. Patrick and his men also laughed at the vice-admiral’s remark. The meal in a private area of the canteen was relaxed but quick. There were still many things to do before they could think of a well-deserved rest. They were informed that an investigation would be opened into the American military attaché in Buenos Aires, Darlington, regarding Captain Lippsmacher’s suicide.

“Right then, gentlemen,” Vice-Admiral Clark began as the meal drew to a close, “as we discussed and as I’ve asked of you, I now expect your reports by tomorrow morning. Captain Malone, come to my office. I need to sort out a few things with you.”

"See you tomorrow, Captain," said Patrick's colleagues as they took their leave.

Betty, Clark's secretary, greeted them as they entered the vice-admiral's office.

"Captain Malone, it's good to see you again," she said, then turning to Clark, "Vice-Admiral, I have the documents you asked for regarding your meeting with the captain. They're on your desk."

"Good afternoon, Betty. You look lovely. I think Vice-Admiral Clark looks after you very well…" Patrick joked, whilst thinking that Betty's women's uniform suited her very well.

"Thank you, Captain. I couldn't be happier with my job, or with Vice-Admiral Clark," Betty smiled, blushing slightly, seeming to guess Patrick's thoughts and glancing at Clark.

"Thank you very much for the documents, Betty. You're always so efficient. Come on, Patrick," the two men entered the spacious office.

Patrick made his way to a meeting table to the left of Clark's main desk. Clark picked up the documents his secretary had prepared for him.

"Here's everything," he said, sitting down opposite Patrick and lighting a cigarette. He offered Patrick one, which he politely declined, whilst taking the documents out of the folder he was carrying.

"What's this about, Vincent?" Patrick began.

"First of all, I'd like you to tell me about your report and what you've learnt from that German, Reith, I believe his name was, regarding the presence of German submarines in Argentine waters," Clark replied as he sorted through the information in front of him.

"The story Reith told me struck me as incredible. I must also tell you that, given the interest you showed in that conversation—and especially on the part of the 'bigwigs'—there must be some truth in it." Patrick recounted the story as he knew it, based on the German's account, which he had summarised in his report. Clark didn't ask him a single question during his account. It seemed he didn't need to.

Patrick finished explaining what he knew and, in part, what he thought of the whole affair, and waited for Clark's comments.

"Very interesting…" Clark began.

"Come on, Vincent, I can't believe that's all you've got to say!" said Patrick sarcastically.

Clark smiled. He knew Patrick very well and understood his reaction.

"Nothing you've said surprises me, as we were already well aware of all this," Clark put on a pair of glasses and, as he spoke, seemed to be looking at some papers. "Your words have confirmed our fears that there is German activity in Antarctica." The interrogations we subjected the crews of the two previous submarines to, and the cross-referencing of information we carried out from the various testimonies, also led us to the same conclusion as the evidence in your report.

Clark handed him some confidential documents, which set out the conclusions of the interrogations carried out on the German crews.

"Take a look. What it says will ring a bell. Either they've all agreed to tell the same lie, or they're telling the truth. We believe it's the truth."

Patrick leafed through the documents and clearly saw highlighted words that did ring a bell: Base 211, Schwabenland, Neuberlin, KG-200, SS.

"We have good reason to suspect that there is something serious and very dangerous down there, threatening our interests and those of the free world. We don't know what it is, what they're plotting, or what their next moves will be, but it is undoubtedly a threat."

'Right, so what's the plan, Vincent?' asked Patrick,
leaving the documents on the table.

"In half an hour, Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Captain Richard H. Creuzen, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal will be here in the main meeting room. Washington is betting big. This is no joke, Patrick."

Patrick was speechless at the calibre of the figures who
had just mentioned Clark and that they would be there very soon. Admiral Byrd, in particular, had been Patrick's hero because of his explorations of the South Pole, and the whole of North America regarded him as a man of exceptional calibre. He was a much-admired figure. They had written

a multitude of books about him. He was undoubtedly a very busy man, having been an explorer, a naval officer, a pilot and a writer. I did not know him personally, but it was a unique occasion. My mind recalled the major milestones in the life of this Antarctic explorer. He was born in Winchester, Virginia, in 1888. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1912. Within a few months, he was posted to the newly established Naval Aviation School. During the First World War, he commanded an Air Station in Nova Scotia. After the war, he was promoted to commander. In 1925, he led his naval air unit on an expedition to Greenland.

Byrd's first polar expedition was to the Arctic. On that expedition, he claimed a vast expanse of that territory for the United States. He named it Mary Byrd Land in honour of his wife. On 9 May 1926, together with pilot Floyd Bennett, he flew over the North Pole for the first time. He was awarded the Medal of Honour for his feat. In 1927, Byrd crossed the Atlantic Ocean with two other pilots, a month after Charles Lindbergh had made the same journey solo. After 42 hours in the air, Byrd's plane crashed off the coast of France, but he and his crew survived.

Following this feat, Byrd became interested in exploring Antarctica and, between 1928 and 1941, led five major expeditions to the continent. From 1928 to 1930, he led his first expedition with the aim of mapping a large part of the frozen continent. He established a permanent base there called Little America. During that expedition, with a crew of three other pilots, Byrd made the first flight over the South Pole. It was the year 1929. In 1950, at the end of the expedition, he was appointed Vice-Admiral of the US Navy.

From 1933 to 1935, Byrd returned to Antarctica. He spent five months completely alone in a hut 120 miles south of Little America, studying temperatures in the interior of the Antarctic continent. He endured temperatures of nearly 50° below zero. Due to a blocked chimney in the hut, Byrd became very ill and was on the verge of death. He gave up on calling for help. Eventually, a polar tractor from the expedition rescued him after receiving no word from him. On his third expedition to Antarctica from

1939 to 1941, Byrd undertook further flights and discovered the southern limit of the Pacific Ocean.

Everything pointed to this being his fourth expedition to Antarctica. Certainly, his reputation and knowledge of the area made him perfectly suited to take part in that potential expedition. But what was it all about this time? Patrick would soon find out.

Chapter 6

THE LAST AMERICAN EXPEDITION BEFORE THE SECOND GurseA MuicoiAr

EIt is interesting to review Admiral Byrd's final voyage to Antarctica between 1939 and 1941. The Second World War had just begun and the United States was yet involved in the conflict. Up to that point, the admiral's previous expeditions had been of a civilian nature. American military interest in the Antarctic continent began in the late 1930s. The American military leadership realised that public interest in Antarctica was growing due to the success of Byrd's civilian expeditions. President Franklin D. Roosevelt became actively involved by establishing the 'U.S. Antarctic Service' and sponsored two separate expeditions: one led by Richard B. Black and Finn Ronne, and the other by Admiral Byrd, who coordinated them and established the 'U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition'.

But this had begun somewhat earlier when, in November 1937, Dr Ernest Gruening, Director of the " s Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the Department of the Interior", approached Richard Black regarding the government's minimal requirements for undertaking an American expedition to Antarctica. The "U.S. Exploring Expedition" of 1838 to 1842, commanded by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, was the last major American venture with any government involvement. Since then, the expeditions undertaken have been, for the most part, of *a* civilian *nature*. Black sent his comments in reply to Dr Gruening, in which he outlined the potential interests of the US government

in Antarctica, as well as plans for a possible expedition. These remarks caught the attention of Dr Gruening, who immediately informed the State Department and President Roosevelt.

Meanwhile, Byrd and his civilian partners in Boston were making plans for a third expedition to Antarctica. Like the two previous ones, this expedition was to be funded privately. In late 1958, Byrd became aware of the government's plans when a State Department official consulted him on the Antarctic issue. On 7 January 1939, Roosevelt sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, approving the plans drawn up by the State Department. Roosevelt also suggested involving the Department of the Interior in the plans with Byrd and Lincoln Ellsworth and the budget for the expedition, whilst also considering the possibility of maintaining a permanent group at the 'Little America' base.



Admiral Byrd during one of his Antarctic expeditions prior to Second World War

The President's memorandum led to two significant developments. The first was that Admiral Byrd cancelled the plans for the civilian expedition. Given his extensive knowledge of Antarctica, he was accepted as leader and became actively involved in the planning and organisation of the expedition. The second consequence was the formation of an interdepartmental committee, which eventually became known as the 'Executive Committee of the U.S. Antarctic Service'. On 13 January 1959, the Secretary of State requested that the Secretaries of War, the Navy, the Treasury and the Interior appoint representatives to assist in an Antarctic Committee.

On 5 June of the same year, Congress introduced a bill authorising Antarctic research, and on 7 July, President Roosevelt himself sent letters to the Secretaries urging them to appoint representatives. As a result, the so-called "Executive Committee of the U.S. Antarctic Service' was formally established. The four departments mentioned above were represented by Captain C.C. Hartigan and Mr Hugh S. Cumming Jr., for the Navy and the State Department respectively; Commander E.G. Rose on behalf of the Coast Guard (Treasury); and Ernst Gruening for the Interior Department. Commander Robert A. English was appointed Executive Secretary. He was succeeded in 1942 by J. E. MacDonald.

Although the US government funded the expedition, there were also additional donations and gifts from anonymous citizens, corporations and institutions. However, the allocated budget was not entirely sufficient, and so the coordinated efforts of the various departments involved filled the financial gap for equipment, services and general supplies. Admiral Byrd donated a large portion of the many supplies he had stockpiled for his own expedition. Some of the private donors were annoyed by the government's lack of publicity regarding the aid they had provided. Over a hundred companies and private donors had contributed money, supplies and equipment to the expedition, including tractors, food, clothing, instruments, tobacco and books. For example, the Kholer family from Wisconsin, George F. Getz and Justin W. Dart of Chicago had donated the Barkley-Grow seaplane that was on board the ship "Bear".

Two ships were used on this expedition. One was Admiral Byrd's old ship, the "Bear" from Oakland, which had been used on his second Antarctic expedition. This ship had been refitted by the Navy and renamed "U.S.S. Bear" for the new expedition. The second ship, the "North Star", was a wooden vessel fitted out for Arctic navigation and had been built in 1932 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the US Department of the Interior. Every summer it was used to transport supplies to Alaska. Because it was summer in Antarctica but winter in Alaska, the Department of the Interior was able to send the ship on Antarctic duty without interrupting service in Alaska.

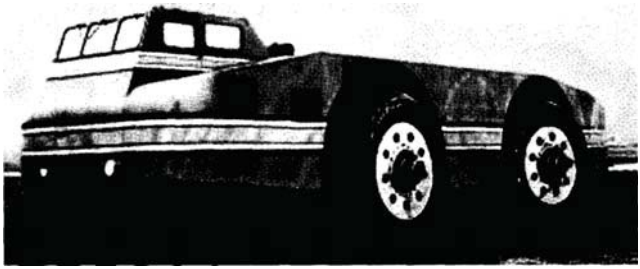
The new expedition carried four seaplanes. The ship "Bear" carried a twin-engine Barkley-Grow. Also on board were two Condor Curtis-Wright biplane seaplanes, which had been extensively used by the US Marine Corps over the previous five years. And the fourth was a completely new, single-engine model from Beechcraft, which was to fly in conjunction with the so-called "Snow Cruiser".

The "Snow Cruiser" was a huge vehicle that contained sleeping quarters, a scientific laboratory, a photographic laboratory, a radio and a chart room. Two 150-horsepower diesel engines were connected to generators that supplied power to the 75-horsepower electric motors fitted to each of the wheels. Consequently, each wheel had its own independent drive system. It featured a system whereby, when the vehicle had to negotiate a slope, the wheels could be retracted, allowing the "Snow Cruiser" to glide on its underside. The aircraft, which was fitted with skis, was mounted on this vehicle to carry out aerial reconnaissance within a radius of some five hundred kilometres.

To round off the specifications of this 'monster', it could also carry a year's supply of food, 10,000 litres of diesel – enough for 8,000 kilometres – and 3,000 litres of fuel for the aircraft. Its top speed on flat ground was 50 kilometres per hour, and it could negotiate gradients of almost 40 per cent. It weighed 30 tonnes.

125 men set sail from the United States on two ships. Captain Isaac Listad commanded the 'North Star' and the captain of

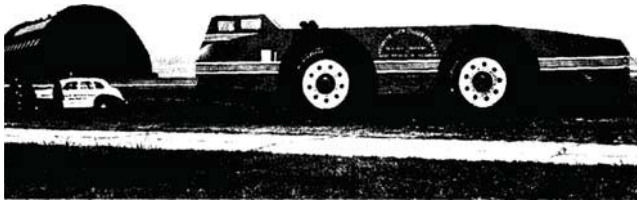
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The "Snow Cruiser" photographed at an airfield prior to its transfer to the fleet.

Lieutenant Richard H. Creuzen in command of the "Bear". Almost all the men on the expedition came from the military, civilian government agencies and government institutions. Some volunteers were hired by the Department of the Interior at $10 a month, including food and clothing. A total of 59 men were divided into two groups, and the scientist Dr F. Alton Wade was put in charge of the "Snow Cruiser" with three men under his command on board the vehicle. When it broke down, which was to be expected, it was left parked at West Base and the four crew members were incorporated into the 29-man group at that base.

The other group, East Base, consisted of 26 men and was led by Richard B. Black. This group included members who had previously gained experience in Antarctica with Byrd. Among them were Bendik Johansen and Paul Siple, who had been on Byrd's first and second expeditions, whilst Clay W. Bailey (radio operator), Vernon D. Boyd (chief mechanic), Louis P. Colombo (first mechanic) and Lieutenant Isaac Schlossbach (executive assistant) had been with Byrd on the second expedition. Black, who was in charge of East Base, Joseph D. Healy, the dog trainer and guide, and Finn Ronne, the engineer, were also veterans of Byrd's second Antarctic expedition. I can't

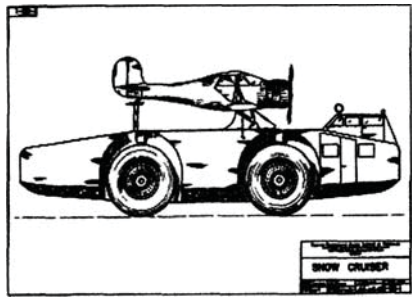


Another photo of the "Snow Bruiser"
You can compare its size with that of a car.

forget Frederick G. Dustin, Byrd's personal assistant on board the "Bear". Many of them took part in other expeditions that were carried out later on.

The objectives of this mission were set out in an order issued by President Roosevelt on 25 November 1939. Byrd received this order in Balboa, in the Canal Zone, as he was boarding the 'North Star' on the 30th of that month. The President wished to establish two bases: East Base, near Charcot Island or Alexander I Land. He offered Margarita Bay as an alternative if a suitable location could not be found on either of the islands specified above; and West Base, in the vicinity of Edward VII Land. If this location proved unfeasible, an attempt could be made to establish this base in Whale Bay.

In the early hours of 15 November 1939, the ship "North Star" set sail from Boston bound for Philadelphia, where two aircraft were loaded on board. On 21 November, it set sail for Delaware Bay, continuing on to the Panama Canal. The ship "Bear" set sail from Boston on 22 November, arriving in Norfolk on the 25th to take on board one of the twin-engine aircraft. On 26 November, it left the Virginia Capes behind, heading for the Panama Canal. Admiral Byrd remained in Boston to supervise the loading operation until the very last moment and flew from Washington to the



Side view of the "Snow Cruiser"

The Canal Zone, where he boarded the "North Star" in Balboa on 50 November. The ship set sail for New Zealand, stopping at Pitcairn Island on 15 December and arriving at Eastern Island on the 17th of that month. It then arrived in Wellington, New Zealand, on 27 December. On 3 January 1940, the "North Star" departed New Zealand for the Roos Sea, arriving at Whale Bay and establishing the Western Base on 12 January.

For its part, after refuelling, the "Bear" set sail for Bahía de las Ballenas on 6 December, arriving on 14 January 1940 to assist with the establishment of the first base: Base Oeste. Working in continuous 12-hour shifts, the ship was unloaded in less than a week and, by 24 January, the "North Star" set sail for Valparaíso in Chile to take on more supplies, prefabricated houses and a twin-engine Curtis-Wright Condor aircraft before returning to Antarctica. Meanwhile, the "Beard", under Byrd's command, headed east along the frozen coastline to find a suitable site for East Base. Byrd located it via aerial reconnaissance on 8 March. An island on the northern side of Neny Bay, just north of Alejandro Island and Margarita Bay. East Base was established there. From that moment *on*, the island was named Stonington Island. The two ships met in the area and by 20 March, both had been fully unloaded

The following day, they set sail for the United States, sailing together as far as Punta Arenas in Chile, and from that point they parted ways, with the ‘Bear’ heading for Boston and the ‘North Star’ for Seattle, to continue on their usual routes through Alaska.

Despite the high hopes that had been pinned on the “Snow Cruiser”, it soon became clear that it would not work. The plan was to drive it to the South Pole via the Queen Maud Mountains. From the very start, the vehicle was plagued by bad luck. When it was unloaded at Whale Bay, the ramp nearly collapsed under its enormous weight; thanks to Dr Poulter, who was driving it, disaster was averted by giving the vehicle full power, though this left a deep trench in the ice at the unloading site. Despite its large wheels, traction in the snow was inadequate. The weight was enormous. It sank into the snow and its inadequate electric motors could only move it very slowly. A week after unloading, it was still halfway up a ramp from the unloading bay to a small promontory nearby. After a strenuous effort, the machine reached West Base, where it was sheltered from the elements with blocks of ice and canvas. That was the end of the ‘Snow Cruiser’s’ adventure in Antarctica.

Returning to the expedition’s objectives, the main one—apart from establishing the bases—was to chart the continental coastline between the 72° West and 148° West meridians and to confirm the geographical coordinates of Hearst Land, James W. Ellsworth Land and Marie Byrd Land. A second objective involved charting the then-unknown western coast of the Weddell Sea, between Cape Eielson and the Luitpold Coast. Given the scope of the objectives and the unpredictable circumstances that are always present in Antarctica, it is remarkable that the majority of the objectives were achieved. It is significant that two permanent bases were established for a year, almost 2,000 kilometres apart by air and more than 2,500 kilometres apart by sea.

Thanks to the scheduled flights, it was possible to map almost 1,000 kilometres of coastline that had previously been unknown. Among these discoveries are Hobbs Coast, Walgreen Coast, Thurston Peninsula and Eights Coast. It

New inland areas were discovered, and aerial reconnaissance from East Base succeeded in extending the Antarctic coastline westwards to the 85th meridian, resulting in the discovery of Bryan Coast and Carroll Bay at its eastern end. The first high-altitude meteorological station was established in November and December 1940 on Stonington Island. A wide range of variables were monitored, *including* seismic activity, cosmic rays, aurora borealis, biological factors, and magnetic fields, to name but a few. It was a highly successful operation.

Due to international tensions and, above all, the outbreak of the Second World War, it was decided that it would be best to evacuate the bases rather than send relief personnel. Once again, the two ships took part in the evacuation. The “Bear” set sail from Philadelphia on 13 October 1940 and the “North Star” left Seattle on 11 December. The “Bear” arrived at Whale Bay on 11 January 1941 and the “North Star” on 24 January. In the hope of returning as soon as possible and reoccupying the bases in the future, the vast majority of equipment, vehicles and supplies were left behind in Antarctica. The two ships departed from West Base on 1 February, heading for Margarita Bay with all the base personnel on board. On 24 February they reached the vicinity of Ade Laida Island, north-west of East Base, but a thick layer of ice prevented them from entering Margarita Bay. To save fuel, the ships returned northwards, where they anchored at Andersen Harbour, in the Melchor Islands, in the centre of Dallmann Bay. Several attempts were made to break through the thick layer of ice, but this proved impossible. The season was advancing and the situation could only get worse, so it was decided to evacuate the base by air. The Condor had been repaired following an accident in which a landing gear ski had broken. On 15 March, the North Star was ordered to head for Punta Arenas in Chile, where the men from West Base could disembark and food and fuel could be loaded for a second year at East Base if it remained cut off.

Meanwhile, on 16 March, the “Beard” dropped off a small group on Mikkelsen Island to prepare a landing strip so that personnel from East Base could be evacuated. The first flight took off on 22 March with 12 men on board, along with

specimens and emergency equipment. A second flight managed to evacuate the remaining 12.

The aircraft was abandoned on Watson Island and the “Beard” set off immediately, arriving in Punta Arenas on 29 March. The “North Star” arrived in Boston on 5 May and the “Bear” on 18 May.

Chapter 7

MEETING AT BASE N RFOLK

Norfolk Naval Base was and remains the most important base of the Atlantic Fleet and one of the oldest in the United States Navy. Its construction began on Independence in 1917. Nevertheless, its importance grew, largely due to the expansion of the Naval Air Station during the 1930s. The base was then known as the Norfolk Naval Air Station and was a pioneer in the development and technical testing of catapults and aircraft arresting gear for the Navy, which were to be used on aircraft carriers, all of which was given the highest priority. The base was responsible for the aircraft carriers Wasp, Ranger, Yorktown and Hornet, which underwent general maintenance, crew training, gunnery trials, flight tests, etc., prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

When the war in Europe broke out on 1 September 1939, the Norfolk base prepared a site with two small operational areas—Chambers Field and West Landing Field—for general training. During the conflict, the base played a direct role in supporting anti-submarine patrols. President Roosevelt's response to the outbreak of war in Europe was the National Emergency Programme of 8 September 1959. This led to a dramatic increase in all naval activities at the Norfolk base. Wartime activities began with the declaration, on 21 October 1959, of a 600-mile-wide Neutral Maritime Zone around the North American coast

. Four patrol squadrons based in Norfolk and designated VP-51, VP-52, VP-53 and VP-54 were among the first surveillance units in the new neutral zone declared by the United States.

Of course, the war profoundly changed the character of Norfolk and the general level of activity. Between December 1959 and the spring of 1940, Norfolk had around 8,000 people working on various projects. The Hepburn Committee made recommendations to Congress early that year to double the size of the base and its personnel by establishing what was known as East Camp. Hangars, a new infirmary, powder magazines, warehouses, barracks, harbour entrances and an administration building were constructed.

In 1940, the federal government began dredging Willoughby Bay in order to proceed with the construction of the new Seaplane Air Station at Breezy Point. President Roosevelt visited the Air Station in late July, clearly noting that the objectives of supporting ships involved in various overseas conflicts had been achieved. By 1941, it seemed inevitable that the United States would enter the war. Construction of new facilities was accelerated to meet the requirements set by the Navy. Military leaders in Washington indicated that the facilities should be capable of servicing five carrier-based air groups, comprising seven to nine maritime patrol squadrons, and training programmes prior to the incorporation of 200 pilots from the Atlantic Fleet. The task of preparing the British flight crews of HMS Illustrious and HMS Formidable was also added.

In June 1941, the base's personnel numbers rose significantly once again. There were over 10,000 new recruits at the Naval Training Station, 1,590 officers and 14,426 sailors assigned to ships based in Norfolk. After Pearl Harbor, the base's capacity was increased by a further 5,500 recruits. The Navy planned to double the capacity of the hospital, as *well as* the sports facilities, and to build an auditorium.

All this increased the base to five times its original size. East Field had an estimated capacity of 410 aircraft,

Breezy Point could accommodate 72 seaplanes. As for the military, the number of officers rose from a total of 2,076 in December 1940 to 16,656 on active duty in December 1943. During the first six months of 1945, the flight department recorded an average of 21,073 sorties per month and a daily average of 700 flights. That amounted to landings and take-offs every two minutes, 24 hours a day.

A new Naval Air Centre command was formed on 12 October 1942 under the command of Captain J.M. Shoemaker to coordinate operations within the Norfolk area. The airfields were used for training, patrol operations, bombing practice and aerial gunnery. In 1940, the Navy's aviation programme was approved by Congress with a production target of 10,000 aircraft, later increased to 15,000

After war was declared following Pearl Harbor, Germany launched a submarine offensive known as 'Operation Drumbeat' against ships off the Atlantic coast of the United States. The so-called Eastern Seaboard Command, a command based in New York, directed the American response against the German submarines. The units of the 5th Air Wing flew under the command of the 5th Naval District. The units of the 5th Air Wing consisted of Kingfisher seaplanes and PBY-5A Catalinas. At that time, the Norfolk base provided cover and support for all these aircraft.

In that early phase of the war, German submarines were at their most effective. Still operating with a peacetime mindset, the Americans left highly valuable ships within striking distance of the German 'Grey Wolves'. From January to April 1942, the Eastern Naval Frontier recorded 82 sinkings of American ships. During that period, only eight German submarines were sunk. The number of ships and aircraft patrolling American waters was increased, and the number of sinkings fell. Consequently, the great contribution of the Norfolk base during the Second World War was the training it provided to a wide variety of naval air units, which carried out excellent combat and surveillance work against the German submarines of the various Atlantic fleets.

In December 1942, the Norfolk base also expanded the training facilities for sailors who were to join the fleet. During the war, three huge docks were built to accommodate escort vessels for convoys bound for England or Russia. The advanced air training unit helped sailors acquire the training and skills necessary for aircraft maintenance.

After the war ended, unsurprisingly, much of the activity described above declined significantly, although large ships, aircraft carriers, submarines and a wide range of aircraft continued to maintain a significant presence. It seemed that the fate of much of this equipment would be to be scrapped. The town also felt the end of the war, particularly the small businesses that had relied heavily on the large number of recruits who had undergone their training there and the substantial trade they had generated.

For the base, that day was very important. After his meeting with Clark, whilst having a coffee, Patrick could see through the window the flurry of activity as cars and security escorts began arriving at the base. The roar of the powerful olive-green Harley Davidson WL45 motorcycles heralded the arrival of an important figure each time. There was no doubt that the participants in the meeting arranged by Clark were arriving.

Forrestal, Nimit2, Creu2en and finally Byrd arrived in a sort of convoy of vehicles. Clark gave him a wink when Admiral Byrd appeared.

“There’s the boss,” said Clark. They watched as they entered the building. “Let’s go and welcome them.”

They left Clark’s office and made their way to the main entrance hall. Admiral Byrd was already there with his dog, an English bulldog.

The admiral smiled when he saw Clark and shook his hand firmly.

“Good morning, Admiral Byrd.”

“How are you, Vincent? Can I leave my dog here?” replied Byrd, gesturing towards the bulldog, who was resting his belly on the floor.

"No, don' , don't worry, Admiral. I'll send an assistant to take care of him.

In an instant, a sailor appeared and took charge of the dog.

"Admiral Byrd, I'd like to introduce you to Submarine Captain Patrick Malone"—Patrick seemed somewhat overwhelmed by Byrd's presence—"He's one of our finest men and, as I mentioned in the reports I sent you, he'll be with us to brief us and assist us with the 'Antarctica' project we're currently investigating."

Byrd extended his hand to shake Patrick's, whilst smiled. Patrick, who had stood to attention to give a classic military salute, shook it firmly. For him, it was an emotional moment.

"Admiral Byrd, believe me when I say it is a pleasure to meet you in person, as I am a great admirer of all your work in Antarctica."

—It's a pleasure to meet you too, Captain. Vice-Admiral Clark has told me a great deal about you. The truth is, those were expeditions to a marvellous land. It's another planet —Byrd seemed to be there—. Anyone who visits Antarctica is spellbound. I assure you of that, Captain Malone.

Patrick was taken aback by Byrd's description of Antarctica. The other members of the meeting—Creuzen, Nimitz and Forrestal—joined Byrd, Clark and Patrick in the spacious hall of the base's central building. The group was large because each man had brought his own small entourage of aides and specialist military assistants. After effusive greetings, Vice-Admiral Clark invited them to follow him to the meeting room in one of the wings of the building. They entered the spacious room, which was dominated by a huge window from which a large part of the base could be seen. Submarine XXI was clearly visible.

Patrick was already familiar with this room, as he had once attended a meeting there in the midst of the war, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Photographs of aircraft carriers, submarines and military vessels of all kinds covered much of the walls, complete with their identifying insignia. Autographed photographs of numerous admirals could also be seen there, arranged in perfect anti-

. The models of famous ships such as the ‘Mayflower’ or the American Civil War battleships ‘Merrimac’ and ‘Monitor’ were particularly eye-catching.

One of the models that attracted the most interest was that of the Confederate submarine Hunley, which also took part in the American Civil War, sinking the USS Housatonic off the coast of Charleston on 16 February 1864. The Hunley was also sunk during that operation and was salvaged in August 2000. It was propelled by a propeller driven by eight men who turned a crankshaft connected to the propeller shaft. Patrick always wondered how such a thing had been possible and what courage it must have taken to board that 40-foot-long cylinder that was the Hunley.

Betty, Clark’s secretary, entered the room and showed each participant to their seat at the imposing elliptical table that dominated the room. She handed each guest a folder. As she went about her work, she exchanged a glance with Patrick, who winked at her with a smile. She returned the wink with a smile of her own. In front of each seat was a small nameplate identifying each participant with their military rank. The aides and assistants sat in a sort of second row, behind their immediate superiors. In fact, their role—apart from any notes they might take—was to provide their superiors with the necessary information at all times. A table with *coffee* and sweets was set up at one end of the room for the breaks.

Byrd, Creuzen, Forrestal and Nimitz were seated by the window, sorting through their papers, whilst Patrick sat with his back to the window, with Clark at his side, so that he could see all their faces perfectly. The model of the Hunley stood before him, which pleased him. It really was a meeting of the highest level; only the President was missing, he thought. Betty sat behind Clark, in front of a small typewriter and a briefcase, from which she gathered the information her boss might need and prepared to type up whatever was discussed during the meeting. After a brief consultation with Betty and without further ado, Clark began to speak.

‘First of all, I would like to thank you for being here today at the request of the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, and the Ad



Admiral Chester Nimitz

Richard Byrd for organising this meeting. It is a pleasure for us here in Norfolk to see you all again and to be your hosts.

Everyone nodded in response to these words of welcome. Then, turning to Patrick, he continued:

'I would also like you to meet Submarine Captain Patrick Malone'—Patrick smiled—'whom you have already had the chance to greet before coming in here. You may be wondering why he is here. It is quite simple, gentlemen: Captain Malone is not only our finest man in the submarine service, but he also has my complete confidence.

Out of the corner of his eye, Patrick thought he glimpsed a smile of approval on Betty's face as she took notes. Clark continued:

'He has brought the German Type XXI submarine you see moored there to Norfolk'—everyone nodded—'It was an operation of the utmost importance to the United States, since it was not only a matter of bringing in the most modern and fully equipped enemy submarine, but Captain Malone was also able to learn, during the voyage, details about the German missions to

Antarctica, which is of such concern to us. In the folders Betty handed out to you on arrival, you will find a copy of the captain's report on this matter. You will also find the points we need to discuss today.

The reports began to appear on the table and were being glanced over by everyone. The meeting agenda was on a separate sheet.

'If you agree, and as scheduled, the Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal, will open the meeting. Thank you very much.'

James Forrestal, of Irish descent, entered government service shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War and, in less than a decade, left an indelible mark on his country's military structure. He was born on 15 February 1892 in Beacon, New York. His father was a successful building contractor. The young Forrestal worked at a local newspaper for three years, combining this with his studies, first at Dartmouth College and later at Princeton. Due to financial difficulties, he had to abandon his studies shortly before graduating in 1915. The following year, he joined the Wall Street firm William A. Read Co., remaining there, apart from a brief period during the First World War, until 1940. He held various positions, becoming a partner in 1923, vice-president in 1926 and president of the company in 1958, at the age of 46.

President Roosevelt appointed Forrestal as a special assistant in June 1940, marking the start of what would be eight years of government service. Two months later, Roosevelt appointed him Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a newly created post. He soon demonstrated his managerial skills and, following the sudden death of Frank Knox in 1944, was promoted to Secretary of the Navy. His most significant work in that role up to that point had been the management of the final year of the war, 1945, and the subsequent demobilisation.

Forrestal joined them and began to speak:

'Dear Vice-Admiral Clark, thank you for organising this meeting, which Admiral Byrd and I had requested of you recently following our previous meeting with President Truman. I also welcome Captain Malone and hope his participation will be fruitful.

Clark thanked him with a nod and a slight smile. Organising all this for these figures had been difficult and had to be done in a short space of time. Forrestal continued:

—The purpose of this meeting is to analyse the data we currently have on German activity before, during and after the war in various theatres of operations, but above all in Antarctica, with the aim of assessing what is happening there and, depending on the findings, determining what action we can take. We must also consider the highly likely prospect of military intervention, should we deem it appropriate.

Forrestal's words echoed through the large room and the participants exchanged glances.

Forrestal understood the gravity of his words.

—We all know that, officially, the war is over as far as the general public is concerned, and so any military action at this point would not enjoy sufficient public support. We have demobilised a large part of our army, and peace is the order of the day. People are tired of war. We have lost many compatriots, young Americans who have laid down their lives in Guadalcanal, Corregidor, Normandy, the Ardennes, Sicily, Tunisia, etc., so that this great country might endure and clearly chart the world's destiny. We did not win the war for nothing. We won it so that everyone might know what it means to take on the United States of America. Alarming news is reaching us from the Soviet Union and of its turn against our interests. We have long suspected this. We are developing a comprehensive programme of aerial surveillance of their military activities using spy planes, which began operating shortly before the end of the war in Europe. We are also aware of their plan to indoctrinate countries within their sphere of influence and anywhere else in the world with communism. Taken together, all this represents a very serious threat to our interests. We cannot allow it — several of those present confirmed Forrestal's words. That is a field, the communist one, which we must address in the coming years, and we will devote our utmost efforts to it. In other words, it is a strategic objective.

After a brief silence, he continued.

'I have explained all this to you because I know there is some unease within our army regarding Soviet activity and what might lie ahead—'

to use communism in the future against our American way of life and, consequently, against the Western way of life. That is why I wanted to reassure you and let you know that we are on top of the matter and hope to resolve it soon. We also have the atomic advantage, which they do not have, to deter the communists and any enemy anywhere in the world. We must know how to play those cards decisively, and we need to make a strong impression on them. Talking about Germany now may seem surprising, to say the least, but even more surprising is the fact that we have recently detected military activity from a country that was supposedly defeated and surrendered unconditionally in May 1945. This activity appears to be confined to the Southern Cone of South America and the Antarctic continent. We know there are countries supporting Nazis who fled after the defeat to South America or South Africa, but they pose no real threat to us. They are merely hideouts that we can control without difficulty. Antarctica, however, could well be a problem in the short, medium and long term, and that is what we must assess and decide upon here. We believe that Germany may indeed possess atomic weapons and other highly developed and advanced military technology.

Silence fell as Forrestal spoke, his words seeming to open up a surprising and unexpected new front for everyone. Information that was utterly bewildering to many of those present began to emerge from Forrestal's words.

—Throughout the war, Germany attempted to attack the United States on its own soil. In addition to various plans for air raids that never came to fruition, I must highlight Operation Pastorius, in which two teams of saboteurs were landed on the east coast of our country. The first team of four men arrived on 12 June 1942 at East Amagansett, Long Island, aboard U-202, and the second team arrived *a few* days later on a beach near Ponte Verda, Florida, aboard U-584; this team also consisted of four commandos. We were very lucky on that occasion, because they were all arrested before carrying out their planned sabotage missions — the faces of those present showed disbelief and astonishment at the information they were receiving. Japan also attacked the United States on its own territory, however incredible that may seem. On 23 February 1942, the Japanese submarine I-17 went submerged in the Strait of Santa Barbara, without

be detected. At around 5.40 pm, it surfaced and fired
17 shells from its deck gun at the fuel depots in Ellwood City, fortunately without causing any damage. On 20 June of the same year, another Japanese submarine fired its shells at a radio station on Vancouver Island. The following day, another submarine, the I-25, fired on military installations at Fort Stevens on the Columbia River in Oregon. Forrestal sensed the impact his words were having on the audience, but he needed everyone to be aware of the gravity of the situation and of enemies determined in their actions. On 9 September 1942, the Japanese submarine I-25 once again launched a Glen-model reconnaissance seaplane from a position near the Cape Blanco lighthouse on the Oregon coast. Piloted by Flight Officer Nobuo Fujita and his co-pilot, Officer Shoji Okuda, the aircraft penetrated some 80 kilometres inland and dropped two incendiary bombs, each weighing 167 pounds, onto the dense forests of Oregon, with the intention of causing a massive fire. There was a second similar mission on 29 September. Although the bombs caused small fires, the rainy season helped us to extinguish them. Finally, I would also like you to know that we have been monitoring German activities in the Southern Cone of South America, and I am in a position to tell you that we have evidence of German military activity in Brazil for much of the war. And not just spies, but soldiers as well. On 24 May 1940, British Intelligence picked up a rumour that a German transport was carrying 6,000 soldiers to Brazil. The same report indicated that other military transports were heading for the same country. The situation was so significant and serious for us that, following the dispatch of American troops to Brazil, on 5 June the Chief of the Army General Staff, General George C. Marshall, stated that the activities of the German fifth column in the Southern Cone must be combated. This matter is still classified. I cannot provide you with any further information at this time.

He paused briefly and then continued:

—(What do I mean by all these real-life examples that you were surely unaware of? Well, that the United States of America is not immune to an attack from abroad. We

have suffered such attacks, but we have chosen not to give them media coverage so as not to alarm the public and to avoid exaggerating what had actually happened. Today, the threat lies in Antarctica and much of the Southern Cone of South America. And that is the reason for our meeting today in Norfolk —Forrestal sat down in his chair—.

/Do you have any questions, gentlemen? I would like this to be an open forum from now on, and we must not forget the general points we need to discuss.

Patrick, after glancing at Clark, seized the opportunity offered by Forrestal.

"I appreciate your surprising information regarding the enemy attacks on the United States, though I'd like to ask something about Antarctica. Is it possible to live in Antarctica? What interest could Antarctica hold for anyone? I have some acquaintances in the area and find it hard to imagine life there under such extreme conditions. I can understand it in South America, but not at the South Pole."

"That's a good question, Captain Malone, but your view would change if you were to visit the place," Byrd interjected, to Forrestal's satisfaction, who gave him the floor. "It's logical to think as you do, but Antarctica has a subsoil that supports a certain kind of life." We, on the last expedition in 1940, were able to confirm that possibility, but, unfortunately, we didn't get any further. The Germans are far ahead of us when it comes to building for extreme climates. They know how to drill through a mountain and construct underground bases, as they have done in various parts of Europe, and they know the area they claimed before the war—which they called Neuschwabenland—very well. I'd like to show you all some photos that I think you'll like and that will help us make a better decision.

One of Byrd's assistants quickly set up a slide projector and, after drawing the curtains in the meeting room, projected some astonishing images onto a screen.

—These photographs were taken during the war and after its conclusion by our spy planes, which flew at high altitude using powerful, high-precision telephoto lenses.

The first photograph showed a convoy of vehicles travelling across the frozen Antarctic steppe.

—You will notice that this convoy consists of German vehicles we had never seen before, specially designed for those latitudes.

Another photograph showed the convoy in front of an ice mountain, *as* if they were about to crash into it. In the next one, almost the entire formation had been swallowed up by what looked like a tunnel.

'Here is the entrance to an underground base. We've located it. Next!' ordered Byrd. 'Here you can see a turret that seems to rise from the ice and then disappear back into it.'

Indeed, in the sequence of photos, what Byrd had pointed out.

"We don't know what it is. Perhaps it's a radar system, perhaps an underground ventilation shaft or an observation tower. Here you can see what look like antennas or weapons. We don't know —a new photo appeared—. In this image, that structure has vanished, swallowed up by the earth. There's not a trace of it to be seen. It's the perfect hideout! On the other hand, here we have a photo of a small bay where two submarines are clearly visible.

They passed on another photo.

—In this one, one of them has entered a cave or base beneath the ice. You can see the stern rudder before it disappears inside that cave —he said, pointing with a pointer at a small spot next to the ice.

Patrick easily recognised two Type XXI submarines.

"I want to show you the most striking photos."

A photo appeared on the screen. It was different from the previous ones, but nobody could make sense of the image. You could see a sort of ellipse in the air moving amongst the clouds. In the next one, it was clear that it was a disc-shaped aircraft. What appeared to be windows could be seen at the top of the craft.

'What is it?' you might ask yourselves...

That was true, but no one had uttered a word, taken aback by the surprise of they were seeing.

'It's a new German flying machine, about which we know almost nothing.'

Another photo appeared showing the German craft almost directly above the American plane.

"Here's the disc under attack. Our plane managed to make it, battered and bruised, to Patagonia, Argentina, on a near-suicidal flight and save the rolls of film. One of the two pilots died in the attack. He had taken the photos with his handheld camera. The survivor said that the attack by that craft was a horrific experience."

Byrd looked at the faces of those present.

—The photos of the convoy were taken in March this year, a month and a half before the end of the war in Europe. Now I'll tell you the best bit. The photos of the tower, the submarines and the flying disc were taken in October. Less than a month ago!

A murmur of astonishment rippled through the room. Something like this could not be possible. It went deeper than anyone could have imagined.

"My question may seem out of place, Richard," Captain Creuzen interjected, "but how do we know they're German? I haven't seen any identification marks, either on the vehicles or on that disc-shaped craft. The submarines could be German or perhaps Russian." He settled himself more comfortably in his chair, waiting for an answer.

"I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt, Captain Creuzen," replied Patrick, "that those submarines are Type XXI models, of German origin, and as you know, I have crewed one of them from Buenos Aires to Norfolk." Creuzen nodded.

"I understand your question, Richard," Forrestal added, echoing Patrick's words, "but I would remind you all that over 100 U-boats have gone missing. That's more than just a fleet." I can assure you that those submarines are German. We have data provided by captured scientists working under the umbrella of our Operation Paperclip in the United States, showing that the Nazis had made significant technical advances. We know that not only did they have the atomic bomb in several operational units, but they even managed to drop one of them in February of this very year in Russia. They also had aircraft unimaginable to us and our science. That disc is a good example of that.

"Right, James, all right, they're German," continued Creu2en. "But what kind of science or engineering have the Nazis developed?"

How much do we actually know?

‘I can tell everyone here that this involves a form of science and physics quite different from that which any other country has been able to develop,’ Forrestal said, pulling a document from his folder clearly marked ‘EYES ONLY’—a document that could only be viewed by the President and a few authorised advisers, and was therefore strictly confidential. I am not authorised to go into further detail regarding this information, as only President Truman and the National Security Council, of which I am a member, may disclose it. But I can assure you that it jeopardises the position of the United States and its allies. I can tell you, however, in response to the natural curiosity I see on your faces, that this physics developed by the Nazis is diametrically opposed to what they called ‘Jewish physics’, carried out by Professor Einstein, Oppenheimer and other scientists of Jewish origin who are here in our country and working for us.

Captain Richard H. Creuzen looked at Byrd with a look of astonishment at this news, which, despite his high rank in the military hierarchy, completely *baffled him*. He was one of Byrd’s men and had taken part in expeditions to Antarctica alongside him. Byrd smiled slightly, as if to imply that he knew something of all this, but it was clear that he had been unable to tell him. Forrestal continued:

‘If the Nazis gain a foothold there, there will be no way of getting them out. I must also point out a second factor that justifies our prompt visit to the area: uranium.’

The group exchanged glances again at this new revelation from Forrestal. He continued:

‘Uranium is found naturally in part of the Antarctic subsoil, and more specifically in the Neuschwabenland area. According to the intelligence we have, it is a natural material of the highest quality. Germany and its scientists knew what might be there and had no hesitation in seizing that territory. They may be several years ahead of us.’

An aide handed Forrestal a document, which he leafed through. After doing so, he continued his presentation.

‘As you can understand, it is essential that the United States has access to these reserves, particularly because the

The world is moving inexorably towards the application of atomic energy in all walks of life. The atom is the future. We cannot depend on others, nor can we allow that energy to become a problem or a threat to us. We must control it throughout the world. If we have to use force to achieve this, and in doing so eliminate an unpopular enemy along the way, our mission will have secured the future for the coming generations of Americans.

Forrest's words made everyone present think for a moment of their country. At that time, the United States of America was still a surprisingly old-fashioned and traditional nation. The cities remained, for the most part, much as they had been built over the previous two centuries. New York's skyline was still dominated by the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building. No one had yet dreamed of iconic buildings such as the World Trade Center, the United Nations or the Pan Am Building. Due to the 1929 depression and the war, the cars on the streets had not evolved from their traditional appearance and design of almost fifteen years earlier. Trams, and in New York and Chicago the elevated railway, continued to compete with the city bus for passenger transport within the city.

Beyond the major cities of the Northeast and the Midwest, America was just as it had always been. A continent marked by stark differences between states, regions and territories, linked by a simple network of transcontinental railways and a telecommunications system that had remained unchanged since 1928. The economic collapse of 1929 and the Second World War had hindered the development of commercial air travel, which remained at a very rudimentary and basic level and would remain so for a decade. In 1945, as in 1935, flights westwards in DC-3, DC-4 or Martin 202 aircraft still required a minimum of fourteen hours' flying time in a small, cramped propeller plane. America seemed to need a modern catalyst to propel it into the *20th* century*;* the atom could be that catalyst.

Admiral Chester Nimitz asked Forrestal for the floor.

'Excuse me, James, but if we are to involve the Army, the Navy and, no doubt, the Air Force in this Antarctic military project,

I'd like to know under what public pretext we'll set out and receive the blessing of the Senate and the American people. You've said that war isn't popular at the moment. I would remind you that all this costs money and the country is exhausted after the war — several of those present nodded in agreement with Nimitz's words. On the other hand, James, I would like to know, to the extent you can inform us, who is in charge of that German base at the South Pole.

'At the moment, Chester,' replied Forrestal, 'the President's advisory cabinet is working on possible reasons that will be popular and support the whole project. They will present their proposals to us for our analysis and approval. The budget is one of the most important issues.

—I take it, James,' continued Nimitz, 'that military intervention at the South Pole has already been approved?'

'Let's just say it's a course of action being seriously considered by everyone in Washington. In fact, it's practically the only option,' smiled Forrestal. 'That doesn't mean our meeting here in Norfolk today is unnecessary.' The current situation in Antarctica that I am describing, Admiral Byrd's photographs, and the importance of all of us being here to acknowledge all this and agree on a coordinated effort that could lead to military intervention there, make it essential that we are gathered here.

Patrick seemed to be caught up in something far beyond his usual work and his usual circle of contacts. He still didn't understand why he was there.

"So, James," insisted Nimitz, "our task as soldiers is to assess our current offensive capabilities, bearing in mind that, following the war, we have demobilised a significant portion of our armed forces across all three branches, and to see what resources we have at our disposal. We must examine what is available at our major naval bases in San Diego, Pearl Harbour, Yokosuka, Quonset Point and Norfolk."

Byrd joined the conversation.

'I think we need to do as you say, Chester, but this is a military mission unlike any we have experienced before. Our military experience on the European or Pacific fronts has nothing to do with Antarctica. The fighting will be different, and we believe we are facing highly sophisticated enemy military equipment, the true combat capabilities of which we do not know

in combat. My team, with the help of Vice-Admiral Clark and Captain Malone, can contribute experience of life on that extreme continent and know how to gain the upper hand against our enemy.

"I don't see any problem on my part in getting to work on finding out what the Navy can contribute to the project," replied Nimitz, and turning back to Forrestal with a smile, he added: "I'll need the Secretary of the Navy's help. By the way, James, what about my question regarding who is in charge of that Nazi base? Have we heard anything?"

'We know from the German scientists already working for us here that it is most certainly SS General Dr Hans Kammler.'

Forrestal placed a red folder bearing that name in front of him. He opened it. Several photos of General Kammler were distributed among those present. A gaunt, angular face appeared before them. The slightly tilted SS military cap, bearing the fearsome skull of the Black Order, gave him a determined and implacable look.

"He's not just any old soldier. Don't be fooled," Forres-tal said. "He's a man of unquestionable work ethic and brutality. All the underground facilities scattered across Europe and built by slave labour are his doing. By the end of the war, he was the second most powerful man in Germany, and all high-tech projects were under his command."

—The pace he imposed on all the projects already underway, plus the new ones he and his team developed, took German technology beyond anything we can imagine. We are not aware of the true scale of the man. We were lucky that he did not have the time he needed and the war ended. If it is confirmed that he is in Antarctica, we do not know what he may have developed technically, nor the scope of his research, but I have no doubt of the danger he poses. Needless to say, if our operation in Antarctica goes ahead, General Kammler must be captured alive, if he is found there —Forrestal went on to list some details from Kammler's incredible biography.



SS General Hans Kammler, on the left, talks to civil engineers and SS officers during the construction of an underground base in Thuringia.

SS General and Doctor of Engineering Hans Kammler was born on 26 August 1901 in Stettin; his full name was Hans Friedrich Karl Franz Kammler. He studied at the Technische Hochschule in Munich and Danzig, where he graduated as an engineer. He continued his studies to obtain a master's degree and was awarded his doctorate on 29 November 1952 at the Technische Hochschule in Hanover. Throughout his education, he stood out from his fellow students for his discipline and high standard of work.

Kammler's rise through the ranks of the SS was meteoric. Until 1941, he worked *as* an engineer for the RLM (Reich Luftministerium) or the Luftwaffe, overseeing construction projects such as hangars, airfield buildings, administrative offices and any other aviation-related works. In the autumn of that year, he realised he would never rise through the military ranks as he had hoped, and so he requested a transfer to the SS. There he was promoted to the rank of Brigadenführer and was immediately put in charge of the SS's construction projects. By the end of 1941, he had already drawn up a comprehensive plan for



SS General Hans Kammler in France, in one of his best-known photographs on the left, and during a visit to Berlin in 1944.

a construction programme spanning the next five years, with a budget of thirteen billion Reichsmarks, for barracks and concentration camps stretching from the recently occupied territories of Russia all the way to Norway.

Under the orders of Oswald Poh1, he drew up a detailed plan for the rapid expansion of the concentration camps, which impressed his superior. Ever the realist, Kammler identified what he needed to carry out his plan to expand the camps' capacity from four million internees to fourteen million. As his construction plan took shape, he prepared what would become the industrialisation of the camps to obtain slave labour to work for the SS industry. There he came up against Albert Speer, Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production, who did not believe in the need for slave labour to achieve production targets. In the confrontation with Speer, Kammler came out on top. It could be said that Speer was jealous of Kammler's ability, but whilst Speer may have had pangs of conscience over the use of slave labour, Kammler had no moral qualms whatsoever in this regard.

Aged forty at the time, Kammler was an SS officer
cut from the same cloth as Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SD and assassinated in Prague by a British commando unit in 1942. Both were blond, blue-eyed, and always impeccably uniformed. Both were capable of the most unexpected decisions in any

time and circumstance. When Heydrich died, Himmler found in Kammler a replacement who was just as cold and energetic, who would comply with his every wish and who could carry out his simple yet grand vision of Germany's future.

Among other projects, Kammler was tasked with developing the V-2 rocket, a task he undertook with clinical zeal. He transferred the first group of prisoners from Buchenwald to Nordhausen, in the Harz Mountains in central Germany, where they worked in the vast underground facilities where construction of the rockets had begun. More than ten thousand inmates from Buchenwald, mainly Russians, Poles and French, were taken to Nordhausen where they were forced to dig the impossible: an underground factory stretching one and a half kilometres, containing more than twenty kilometres of tunnels and adjacent galleries where rockets, missiles and secret weapons of all kinds would be assembled. Known as the Mittelwerk, it was the largest of its kind in the world. Its construction was completed in a year, with more than twenty thousand prisoners dying in the process. The plans revealed that this was the first phase of a construction programme that would have been three times larger!

Shortly afterwards, Kammler rose inexorably to the highest echelons of Hitler's inner circle. By early 1944, the SS had come to believe in nothing other than ultimate victory and devoted all their efforts and resources to that end. In March 1944, the 'Fighter Aircraft Team' was formed, comprising expert Luftwaffe pilots and officers from the Armaments Ministry who set about increasing the production of fighter aircraft right under the Allies' noses. Kammler was Himmler's representative on the project, offering his expertise in two areas where he was a true specialist: the rapid construction of underground facilities and factories, and his ability to mobilise large numbers of slave labourers. In recognition of this, Hermann Göring entrusted him with the task of transferring the production of strategic aircraft to his underground factories. Just three months later, Himmler was able to announce to Hitler that ten underground aircraft factories, covering hundreds of thousands of square metres, had already been built and were beginning production.

As the Reich collapsed, accelerated by defeats on various fronts *such as* Normandy, with e1

With the Red Army already in Poland and the British and American air forces devastating Germany day by day, Kammler's power was growing. Following the 20 July plot and the influence gained by the SS over the Wehrmacht, Kammler's influence entered its final and most decisive phase. The development of the atomic bomb and the various nuclear tests carried out, culminating in the atomic bombing of Russia in 1945, fell squarely within the sphere of decision-making of the SS general.

On 6 August 1944, following Himmler's appointment as head of armaments, chief of internal security and commander-in-chief of the reserve army, Kammler was given overall responsibility for the entire production of the V-2 rockets and their attacks on England and the Netherlands. Kammler made all decisions, from design right through to the attacks. He was also in charge of all secret armaments developments at the highest level. He had a working group known as the Kammlerstab, which brought together the cream of German research at the time and all the necessary material resources.

In January 1945, as the Red Army captured Budapest and Warsaw and the Western Allies won the Battle of the Bulge, Kammler was officially appointed head of all missile programmes, both defensive and offensive. On 6 February 1945, on Hitler's direct orders, he was given responsibility for all airborne weapons under development, such as missiles, fighters and bombers. He was the most powerful man in Germany after the Führer. Hitler loved Kammler's meticulousness in his work, such as when, following the crushing of the Warsaw Jewish ghetto and to clean up 'the contaminated area', he ensured that every one of the ghetto's 34 million bricks was used in building projects. He was also tasked with improving the technology to increase the efficiency of the ovens and gas chambers, raising the capacity from
10,000 to 60,000 people. For this, he was appointed Obergruppenführer.

In early April 1945, with the Red Army encircling
Berlin and Hitler in his bunker, Kammler was in charge of all aeronautical and aerospace development programmes. Geographically speaking, he could operate in any factory within the narrow borders of the Reich, which were Norway,

Denmark, Northern Germany, Bavaria, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Northern Italy. Almost a straight line on the map. In his diary entry for 3 April, Goebbels wrote that Hitler had tasked Kammler with reforming the Luftwaffe and that high hopes were pinned on his work. In fact, he had already developed a second generation of weapons of all kinds, as well as new propulsion systems and anti-gravity technology for various applications. He had succeeded in forming what today would be called a 'think-tank' in military R&D, which was the most advanced in the world.

The information Forrest had just provided about the supposed enemy they would face in Antarctica was not exactly reassuring. It was someone determined, with the technical capability and resources to take them on without too much difficulty.

"This detailed information you've just given us about Kammler, James, isn't what I'd call good news," said Nimitz, looking at everyone else, who nodded in agreement. "It's a high-risk mission with a completely unpredictable outcome. We're dealing with a top-level professional, a rabid Nazi, armed *with* who knows what."

"I never said it would be easy," replied Forrestal, "but we have no other option if we want to put an end to the German presence in Antarctica. It is a matter of national security."

"I'm not disputing the mission I believe you're outlining," replied Nimitz, "but we must be aware of what we're up against and prepare ourselves properly. We're going to need some time. It's inevitable."

"The best time for the mission is towards the end of the year," said Byrd, with Patrick's confirmation. "That would be the Antarctic summer, which runs from October to April. At that time, the ice is thinner and the temperatures, whilst still low, are not extreme."

'That gives us a year from now to get everything ready, get there and come back,' concluded Nimitz, whilst taking some notes which he then passed to his assistant.

"Well, it's not that simple, Chester," replied Forrestal, "if we carry out the mission, we'll have to stay there longer."

since we need to make the most of whatever we can find. To this end, we will not only build bases next to the ports where the fleet we can send is docked, but we will also be able to make use of any German underground facilities we manage to capture. I wouldn't rule out staying there for at least a year. After that, the contingent sent there can be relieved by a new one.

'It might be tough for the lads to be there for so long,' Creuzen interjected.

"They'll receive a steady supply of provisions, mail and news from home. They won't want for anything," clarified Byrd. "We know how tough it is to be in Antarctica and it's one of our concerns. The permanent base Little America is still available."

"Although it may be somewhat different," Patrick pointed out, "life aboard a submarine, with the crew confined for months on the high seas and in combat, has similarities to what is mentioned here, and for now we're managing it quite well."

"I agree, Captain Malone," replied Forrestal. "I should also add that this Antarctic mission will consist solely of professional troops who remained in our army after the war ended. Therefore, we're not talking about very young conscripts, for whom it might prove more difficult."

'What will this mission be called, James? Do you have a code name?' asked Nimitz.

'We don't have a specific one at the moment. We call it "Operation Antarctica" amongst ourselves, but I'm not opposed to finding a more popular name. If you have any suggestions, they'll be welcome.'

Nimitz was looking at one of the many photos in the meeting room, specifically one showing Destroyer Captain Allan W. Jameson, who had been the American high jump champion before the war. The photo showed him jumping at the 1935 championships in Chicago, where he had won two gold medals.

"Highjump. It' 'll be called Operation Highjump ," said Nimitz suddenly said.

There was a certain amount of surprise among everyone present.

"Why Operation Highjump, Chester?" asked Forrestal with a smile.

The others, without saying so, were asking the same question.

"Because it will be a quantum leap in terms of technology, in testing under extreme weather conditions, in that it will demonstrate our power to the Soviet Union, and because it will take us a long way forward in a short time. America will also expand its geographical reach. Furthermore, it is a name that does not give away its true objective from the outset."

"I don't dismiss it, Chester. I like Operation Highjump."

—Forrestal seemed to relish the name. The others raised no objections to Nimitz's proposal. It seemed that the mission was now clearer to all of them. In fact, they had already fully embraced it, just as Patrick had rightly anticipated.

The meeting continued after a *brief* 'coffee break', and Patrick was able to recount his experience aboard the German submarine and present the report he had drawn up following his conversation with Reith during the voyage. Everything he explained confirmed and elaborated in detail on the fears expressed by Forrestal and Byrd to the rest of the group. Operation Highjump was now justified in the eyes of the military command. Now it remained to convince public opinion.

Five points were made clear and agreed upon:

Testing military equipment and soldiers in cold climates conditions

To consolidate and extend US sovereignty over the the largest and most viable area of the Antarctic continent Determine the feasibility of establishing permanent bases and investigate potentially suitable areas

Develop techniques for establishing and maintaining air bases on the ice and be able to apply the experience in Greenland in the future.

Expand existing knowledge of hydrography, geography, geology, and the meteorological and electromagnetic conditions of the area

The euphemisms used in the points largely concealed the true nature of Operation Highjump, as it marked the beginning of the militarisation of the South Pole, with all its consequences, without ruling out the possibility of a battle against any Germans who might be found there. Nor was there any official mention of uranium, which was one of the main reasons for deploying the powerful military machinery to Antarctica.

The next follow-up meeting was scheduled for 15 March 1946 and would also be attended by Admiral D.C. Ramsey, deputy head of naval operations in Washington.

Shortly afterwards, President Truman, through his advisory cabinet, set out the rationale for justifying Operation Highjump to the public: “To circumnavigate the 16,000 miles of the Antarctic coastline and produce the necessary maps using the most advanced scientific methods. The presence of the highly popular Admiral Byrd and the support provided by the three branches of the armed forces—army, navy and air force—will ensure the mission is carried out smoothly and with every guarantee. America has a sacred duty to preserve every territory on Earth, but first it must be studied and analysed.”

Public opinion was also already prepared for Operation Highjump.

Chapter 8

NEUSCHWABENLAND

The history of German Antarctic exploration dates back to 1873, when the British explorer Sir Eduard Dallmann, commissioned by the newly founded German Polar Shipping Society (Deutsche Polarschiffahrtsgesellschaft) and in command of the German ship "Grönland", discovered new regions and passages in Antarctic waters. Among other discoveries, Dallmann found the island named Kaiser-Wilhelm at the western exit of the Bismarck Strait, along the Biscoue Islands. The Germans were already proving themselves to be innovators in the exploration of the polar regions, as the “Grönland” was the first steamship to explore the waters Antarctic.

Later, at the start of the 20th century, the ship “Gauss” also reached the area, although it remained trapped in the ice for twelve months; on the verge of exhaustion, the crew managed to free the vessel, until it once again set sail for Germany.

Over the next 60 years, eight further expeditions took place, as well as two pivotal ones: in 1911 under the command of Wilhelm Filchner aboard the ship “Deutschland”, and in 1925 aboard the polar ship “Meteor” under the leadership of Dr Albert Merz. The “Meteor” was the first ship designed for polar seas.

One of the new problems that arose at the beginning of the 20th century, just as the First World War was drawing to a close, was the

mail transport between Europe and both North and South America. During the 1920s, two companies competed for the newly opened routes across the Atlantic Ocean. The companies were Pan American Airways, founded by Juan D. Trippe, and the German airline Lufthansa. Transatlantic flights faced numerous challenges regarding fuel supply, logistics and maintenance. The two companies decided to use seaplanes, and the Portuguese Azores became, in their own right, the logical refuelling point.

The Germans devised an ingenious system to solve the problem of the vast distances at sea. They used ships equipped with steam catapults to launch the mail planes and remained in the waters off the Azores to assist and refuel the planes on their return. The ships used a metal platform that they towed behind them, thereby reducing the height of the waves and allowing the seaplanes to land more safely.

The most famous German catapult ships were the "Bremen", the "Westfalen" and the "Schwabenland". The latter, built in 1925, was capable of launching seaplanes weighing up to 14 tonnes. It was a modern, well-equipped ship with a communications system that incorporated the latest technology of the time. It also carried a meteorological station on board that was extraordinary for its time. In May 1958, the "Schwabenland" was visited by James Roosevelt, the brother of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. That very night, the ship received a coded message from Reichsführer SS Himmler, ordering its captain to weigh anchor and return immediately to Germany. No one has ever known what the US President's brother was doing aboard one of Hitler's ships during those highly sensitive times, or whether he actually travelled to Germany on that voyage.

Before the Second World War, Germany's presence and influence in Europe were significant; furthermore, its excellent relations with Japan and other countries in the Far East and South America, as well as Germany's historical colonial legacy in Africa, led Hitler to view it as logical and natural that Antarctica should become a source of new territory and, no doubt, raw materials. It was a geopolitical decision that fitted perfectly with his way of thinking. In fact, there was

military presence to deter him, nor any specific claims that might have troubled him if he decided to establish a German presence on the Antarctic continent. Surely the storm clouds of war gathering over Europe led him to that decision without further delay.

Another key factor to bear in mind regarding the Führer's likely geopolitical decision was his firm resolve to implement the concept of Lebensraum, or the quest for living space for his people. On the one hand, towards the East, as he set out in his *Mein Kampf*, and to populate it with Aryan farmers who would form a human barrier against the possible advance into Europe of what he considered Russian *untermenschen* or 'subhumans', who were the result of the uncontrolled mixing of the different peoples inhabiting the vast Russian expanse. And on the other, a sort of vast zone encompassing countries in the Southern Cone of South America, Chile and Argentina, as well as Antarctica.

This ambitious plan had to be carried out covertly, as the Western powers were rearming in 1958 and Hitler did not want to provoke them further. His most recent provocations had been the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia and Austria; although the populations of both regions had welcomed annexation by the Reich, this had not gone down well in Britain and France. For all these reasons, the mission had to have a civilian-scientific appearance so as not to arouse suspicion.

Thus, in collaboration with the German airline Lufthansa, the concept for the operation was developed and carried out. With *technical* support from the Kriegsmarine and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring—who was the mentor and driving force behind the entire expedition—the operation's distinctly military nature is beyond doubt. The *esoteric* aspect of the expedition is also evident from the secret involvement of the SS's Ahnenerbedienst department.

Command of this enterprise was entrusted to the experienced polar captain Alfred Ritscher, who had more than proven his worth in extreme situations at sea. The ship chosen was the "Schwabenland", Lufthansa's seaplane carrier from which 10-tonne Dornier "Wale" seaplanes could take off with the aid of steam catapults. These catapults accelerated the aircraft to 150 km per hour. The aircraft was recovered by an on-board crane, which hoisted it and placed it on the aircraft carrier's deck.



The ship Schwabenland en route to Antarctica.
Note the aircraft at the stern

The "Schwabenland" was fitted out for the Antarctic expedition in the autumn of 1938 at the shipyards in Hamburg, and it should be noted that the necessary modifications cost the enormous sum of one million German marks at the time, a third of the expedition's budget. The expedition was significant enough that new food canning systems with a much longer shelf life were scientifically developed. A new type of 'almost bulletproof' protective clothing was also developed, with a metallic appearance, but made from whale skin!

In mid-November 1938, whilst the ship "Schwabenland" was being prepared, the "Deutsche Polarschiffahrtsgesellschaft" invited the by then already legendary American Antarctic explorer Richard E. Byrd to Hamburg for a special screening of his new Antarctic film. This film was screened at the Urania cinema in Hamburg before an audience of 82, 54 of whom were members of the "Schwabenland" crew, as a form of training and preparation for the imminent expedition. Richard Byrd, who had already nearly flown over the South Pole in 1929, was at that time still a civilian, although he was a national hero to Americans and a great expert on the entire region.



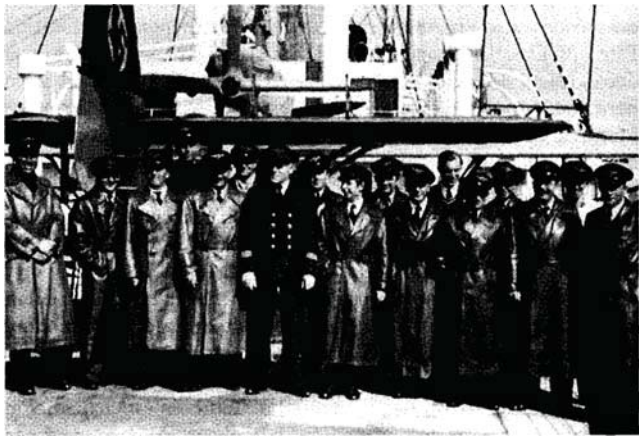
Official emblem of the 1938–1939 German Antarctic expedition

The German ship set sail from Hamburg on 17 December 1938, heading for Antarctica in what is now known as East Antarctica, with a precise plan for its stages and course, reaching its destination on 19 January 1939 at 4° 15' West and 69° 10' South. The ship remained for three weeks off the coasts of Princess Astrid and Princess Marta, opposite what is known as Queen Maud Land, an area claimed by Norway. Paying no heed to these international claims, over the following weeks the 'Passat' and 'Boreas' aircraft carried out 15 flights, covering over 600,000 square kilometres and taking more than 11,000 photographs of the entire area, using special 'Zeiss Reihenmessbildkameras RMK 38' cameras.

The old Norwegian maps from 1951, which had been in use until then, were updated, as not only were they not very accurate, but the photographs taken showed that some of the information on those maps had been estimated or fabricated, since those expeditions had never ventured that far. This expedition also discovered the geological fault line that runs from New Zealand, passes through Schwabenland and continues northwards across the Atlantic Ocean: the famous 'Atlantic Fault'. The expedition's scientists concluded that this proved the existence of immense, geothermally heated rock caverns beneath the Arctic continent.

Among others, one of them—which was explored beneath a glacier—was almost 50 kilometres long and ended in an underground lake of warm water. The secret report drawn up on board suggested that these caverns could be the perfect location for a hidden base in the most isolated, desolate and inaccessible corner of the Earth. It is interesting to note that the German expedition discovered ice-free areas, with lakes and vegetation such as lichens and new types of algae, which they named 'Schirrmacher See'. The geologists on board said that this phenomenon was also due to volcanic hot springs in the Arctic subsoil.

Even more puzzling was the analysis of the food potential that Antarctica might offer. Scientists captured emperor penguins and took them to Germany for study. Walruses were also captured and their bodies dissected. The fat, proteins, vitamins and other nutrients in these animals were analysed. The biological findings revealed



The German pilots who flew over Antarctica, photographing the territory conquered for Germany. They are on board the Schwabendland and behind one of the aircraft.

kept scientists from various German universities busy for many months, but the results were kept secret. It is known that German dieticians were commissioned to prepare nutritious and tasty dishes using only natural products from Antarctica. There is no doubt that all this pointed to the possibility of a long stay on that continent.

Further evidence of German scientific and military interest in Antarctica is the request made in August 1940 by the Director of the Deutsche Reichinstitut für Metallen, Dr Wohlwill, to German metallurgy technicians and specialists to analyse and develop non-ferrous base metals, for use in outdoor buildings and general construction, and which would be capable of withstanding temperatures below minus 60 degrees. It is evident that such temperatures were not reached even on the Eastern Front; therefore, this curious request for an *unusual* alloy could only be related to future operations on the Antarctic continent, which included the possible prolonged stay there of a large number of people.

Around a fifth of Antarctica was surveyed in this way and simultaneously claimed as German territory. To drive this point home to the international community, the two aircraft dropped several thousand small stakes, every 25 kilometres, bearing the expedition's emblem and the swastika. In this way, they physically marked out the territory. The entire area was named 'Neuschwabenland' and is still in use today. Although some of the names the Germans gave to the mountains and unknown areas they discovered have been changed, others remain in use, such as the Mühlig-Hoffman Mountains or the Wohlthat Mountains.

In mid-February, the ship "Schwabenland" left Antarctica and set sail for Germany. After a two-month voyage, it arrived in Hamburg on 10 April 1959. During that time on board, Ritscher carefully organised the maps, photographs and results of the operation. When the ship arrived in Hamburg, Göering did all the honours, introduced the members of the expedition, awarded medals and then, any mention of the expedition, both in the German and foreign media, ceased entirely.

Captain Ritscher, surprised by the results of the flights and the data he had analysed, immediately planned a second, entirely civilian expedition, to be carried out using lighter Fieseler Fi 156 Storch aircraft, fitted with skis on the landing gear. It was scheduled for October 1939. The outbreak of the Second World War brought this project to a standstill.

One of the driving forces behind Captain Ritscher's voyage to Antarctica was Helmut Wohlthat, a former fighter pilot from the First World War who had served in Hermann Göring's fighter squadron, or Jagdstaffel. As a result of that experience, Wohlthat remained on excellent terms with Göring, and on 9 May 1939 he broadcast a detailed report on the expedition. Wohlthat was also an economist and businessman who represented the Third Reich at international financial conferences with American and British bankers. There is no doubt that he was a surprising choice to play a significant role in an Antarctic expedition. What may explain Helmut Wohlthat's participation in that voyage is that he was a member of the secret societies Vril and Thule, which formed the philosophical basis of Nazism from its inception. Also on board the Schwabenland was a sizeable contingent of members of the SS Anherbedienst, which was also known as the 'Ministry of the Occult'.

In October 1939, one month after the outbreak of the Second World War, the "Schwabenland" was returned to service with the Luftwaffe. On 17 December of the same year, in secret and under military jurisdiction, the ship set sail from Hamburg bound for Antarctica once again. On this occasion, a large number of scientists and supplies were on board. The mission this time was to build a permanent base in Antarctica. Breaking through the British naval blockade, it returned to Hamburg on 11 April 1940, where it received a warm welcome, far removed from any secrecy. It had been a successful operation, but not everyone had returned on the ship. A handful of men remained there, at the so-called Neu-Berlin base...

In August 1942, the "Schwabenland" was sent to Tromsø in Norway, which was then under German occupation. It had arrived there as part of a convoy of 24 ships. During the following



One of the seaplanes over the sea in Antarctica

year and a half, no one knew where the ship was. There was no news of its movements. The ship's registration was transferred to Norway, with the approval of Vidkun Quisling's collaborationist government. At the same time, Hitler ceded to Norway a portion of the Arctic territory claimed by Germany, as a gesture of goodwill.

In late 1943, the Schwabenland reappeared under the direct control of the SS. Himmler had the ship's port of registry changed from Oslo to Stockholm, and the ship began sailing under the false flag of neutral Sweden. There is no clear record of the ship's final destination, nor of its missions until the end of the war, so the mystery lies in what became of it, although it is believed to have been sunk in the Skagerrak.

In any case, and in addition to the ship "Schwabenland", German activity in Antarctica continued even during the war. In 1959, the ship "Schleswig-Holstein" surveyed the Kerguen, Saint Paul, Amsterdam, Crozet, Prince Edward and Gough Islands, subsequently visiting Cape Town. Between 1939 and 1941, Captain Bernhard Rogge, in command of the German privateer ship "Atlantis" (military code Hilfskreuzer 16), undertook a long voyage across the South Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South Pacific, visiting the Kerguelen Islands between December 1940 and January 1941. During this visit, a crew member was buried in Ga2elle Bay.

Another German privateer, the “Komet” (military designation Hilfskreuzer 45), commanded by Captain Robert Eyssen, operated in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including a voyage along the Antarctic coast following the route of the whaling ships in February 1941. There it met another privateer, the “Pinguin” (military code Hilfskreuzer 53), and the supply ships “Alstertor” and “Adjutant”. The “Komet” was sunk a few miles from the port of Cherbourg in 1942.

The privateer ship “Pinguin”, under the command of Captain Ernst-Felix Kruder, operated mainly in the Indian Ocean. In January 1941, it captured a fleet of Norwegian whaling ships at latitude 5° 9’ South, 2° 50’ West. The captured vessels were the “Ole Wegger” and the “Pelagos”, both supply ships, and the supply vessel “Solglimt”, as well as eleven whaling ships. One of these whalers was renamed *the* “Adjutant”, which remained with the “Pinguin” as a supply vessel, whilst the rest of the captured fleet was sent to France. Subsequently, the “Pinguin” and the “Adjutant” called at the Kerlouguen and Marion Islands. Later, the “Pinguin” was sunk on 8 May 1941 in the Persian Gulf by the British ship “HMS Cornwall”.

The Kerlueghen Islands were always part of the Germans’ plans for the Antarctic region. For example, in 1942 the Kriegsmarine planned to set up a weather station there. In May of that year, the auxiliary cruiser ‘Michel’ (military code Hilfskreuzer 28) transferred a meteorologist and two radio operators to the supply ship ‘Charlotte Schlieman’, which took them to the islands. However, the orders to set up the station were later cancelled.

In 1942, Captain Gerlach, in command of the auxiliary cruiser “Stier” (military code Hilfskreuzer 23), surveyed the area around Gough Island as a potential site for the deployment of troops and a concentration camp.

It is curious to note the escalation of the conflict in those cold, desolate waters for no apparent reason and without a clear military objective in the context of history. In fact, there were no established shipping routes in that area. Ships did not pass through there, except for whalers. The southernmost point reached by ships was Cape Horn.

Britain carried out ‘Operation Tabarin’ – named after a London nightclub to throw German spies off the scent – which involved setting up an observation post on Deception Island to monitor the movements of German privateers and relay information to Allied convoys. The hidden agenda of this operation was for Britain to spy on Argentina’s pro-German government regarding its plans to control Drake Passage. This operation only came to light after the war under the innocuous name of the Falkland Islands Dependant Survey, or its acronym ‘FIDS’.

On the surface, naval activity appears not to have been significant during the war; however, the level of activity in the South Atlantic by German submarines was enormous. Consequently, the exact nature of these movements in the area remains largely unknown, but the fact is that between October 1942 and September 1944, 16 German submarines were sunk in those waters.

There is no doubt that the German Navy (“Kriegsmarine”) made use of Antarctica. During the Second World War, the ‘sea wolves’ under the command of Admiral Dönitz were aware of the existence of Antarctic caves where a vessel could take shelter without any problem, carry out repairs, allow the crew to rest, and remain undisturbed without any risk of being detected.

Apart from the routine patrols that submarines were required to carry out during combat, it appears that some of these submarines undertook covert operations. For example, the submarine U-859, which on 4 April 1944 at 4.40 am set out on a mission carrying 67 men and 33 tonnes of mercury in airtight, sealed bottles. U-859 was sunk by the British submarine HMS Trenchant in the Strait of Malacca. 47 men lost their lives. What could be the significance of that enormous quantity of mercury that the submarine was carrying so far from Germany? It is known that mercury in large quantities is used as fuel for certain types of aerospace propulsion.

Other large-scale operations took place in the early years of the war, and once again the Kriegsmarine, aided

by the Luftwaffe, played a major role in this. There were also covert military operations launched from Chile, Argentina and South Africa – countries that already had a strong Nordic influence and shared a close affinity with the Third Reich. In addition to the permanent 'Neuberlin' base, which had been left operational by 'Neuschwabenland' on its second voyage to Antarctica, and other small meteorological stations, in 1943 the Germans began work on an even larger base known as Base 211. Teams of scientists from all disciplines were sent to Antarctica, including botanists, zoologists, parasitologists, marine biologists, ornithologists, dieticians, *etc.*

Engineers, cartographers, scientists from the air force and from Germany's secret and highly advanced nuclear research programme were also sent. Drilling machinery, tunnel-boring machines, tractors, aircraft and all manner of equipment required for the establishment of a permanent base were transported via the massive Organisation Todt, which specialised in large-scale construction and bunkers. Thanks to the request made in August 1940 by Dr Wohlwill, structures capable of withstanding temperatures of over 60 degrees below zero were developed, with the aim of receiving and storing all the material in the ports designated for this purpose and near Base 211, to the north-west of the Mühlig-Hoffman Mountains. Civilian and military transport ships, submarines and aircraft were used extensively to transport all the equipment, both personnel and supplies. The convoys departing from South America and South Africa were protected by flotillas of submarines accompanying them on their journey.

It is no coincidence that Admiral Dönitz, who was in command of the Third Reich's submarine fleet, declared enigmatically in December 1943, yet with evident pride: "Die deutsche U-Boot-Flotte ist stolz darauf, daß sie für den Führer in einem anderen Teil der Welt ein Shangri-La-La, eine uneinnehmbare Festung", which translates as: "The German submarine fleet is proud to have built for the Führer, in another part of the world, a Shangri-La, an impregnable fortress". The last convoy of submarines bound for Antarctica, carrying supplies for the civilian and military bases established there, set sail from Germany in the spring of



Admiral Karl Dänitz

1945. Some of these submarines surfaced months after the end of the war.

There is no doubt that the audacity and bravery of the German submarine crews in fulfilling their duty were above the standard of other branches of the armed forces and far above that of enemy submarine crews. Casualty rates, including deaths and missing personnel, exceeded 60% during the war. With crews so driven by a sense of duty, they carried out any task or mission entrusted to them, regardless of the high risk involved. Navigating Antarctic waters was no easy task; if the submarine was hit, death from hypothermia within moments was a common occurrence. Dänitz was very proud of his submariners.

Chapter 9

IN REPORT AND A SUBMARINE

Patrick was studying the report Betty had just placed on the conference table in Vice-Admiral Clark's office. Patrick had been expecting it. A steaming coffee gave off its warm, delicious aroma. The exhaustive information contained in the document was shocking. The sources appeared to be reliable and it was accompanied by photographs of various figures from Nazi Germany who were implicated in the events described therein. SS General Kammler seemed to feature prominently in the report. The report was titled 'Where are they? A research on Nazi key officers and people during and after the war'. It was clearly classified, and Patrick had it because of his participation in the Norfolk meeting. Clark wanted him to read it before meeting with him again to brief him on his role in the overall plan. He wouldn't be long now.

The report claimed that a large number of Germans had disappeared in 1945, from the final months of the war right through to the period following it. In fact, it was said that before and after the war ended, thousands of civilians, both men and women, began to disappear mysteriously. What they had in common was that they were people without families, young people and orphans. This was not unusual, as the Allied bombing of Germany had led to the disappearance of almost entire families.

Most alarming was the disappearance of entire contingents of soldiers along with their weapons, as in the case of the garrison

was stationed in Norway, where no fighting took place and which remained occupied by Germany until the surrender. Half of that garrison, around 50,000 soldiers, vanished from the face of the Earth overnight. More than 2,500 officers of various ranks, including ten generals and a field marshal, also left no trace of their fate when the war ended. Half of these disappearances involved SS troops and officers.

The report included statements from several German soldiers in Norway who stated that, in April 1945, they had been told they would be transferred to two ports in the fjords, from where they would be taken to an impregnable fortress further south. During questioning, they were unable or unwilling to provide further details about the alleged destination. It did become clear that the transfer would be by submarine, combined with aircraft from the mysterious special squadron KG-200. They had not been forced to do anything and had decided to remain in Norway, only to be subsequently transferred to Germany as prisoners of war.

The estimated number of disappearances in the report was more than 250,000 people! That couldn't possibly be true. Where were they? In Antarctica? (Was something like that even possible? What sort of facilities on that continent could house such a huge number of people? He recalled the underground bases and the Germans' experience in building them, but they would have to be immense – what sort of life could they lead there? What did they eat? (And the cold? The questions piled up in Patrick's mind, with no convincing answer in sight. Of course, if all this information were true, the danger facing the United States, its allies and the world at large was very high. The weaponry they appeared to possess was highly advanced and sophisticated. Operation Highjump, though necessary, was going to have a tough time of it.

As Patrick re-read the disturbing report and the attached photos, Vice-Admiral Clark appeared in the office with a smile. Patrick put down his cup and the report and stood up to greet him.

'Thanks for waiting for me, Patrick,' said Clark as he made himself comfortable, taking off his navy blue coat and his officer's cap and shaking Patrick's hand. 'You know *what* the bigwigs are like,' he added, referring to all those who had attended the previous meeting. 'They've kept me in Washington longer than expected and I've had no choice but to spend time with them.

The meeting in Washington had taken place three days earlier and had caused quite a stir at the Pentagon, both because of the high-ranking figures involved and because the press was already beginning to mobilise.

'I must thank you for the opportunity to attend the meeting we had here in Norfolk, Vincent,' said Patrick, sitting down again. 'It was very interesting *to* meet Byrd in particular.' Of course, the information provided there and the report I've just seen aren't reassuring for anyone. You can imagine I've been thinking a lot," he said, pointing to the report on the conference table. "What is my role in all this? I'm not entirely sure.

He stared at Clark as he poured himself a cup of coffee. He stirred the sugar gently and sat down opposite Patrick.

'I want you to take the U-2193 submarine into the German base, as a "Trojan horse", whilst Operation Highjump is being carried out on the surface.

Clark stared intently at Patrick.

"You'll open a second front of attack on the German base."

After a few seconds that felt like hours, Patrick came round and tried to sort through the thoughts that were racing through his mind.

"But that's a mission for commandos or the Navy SEALs. I'm just a submarine captain...

"You're the best. You're already familiar with that vessel. And I know you can get the submarine into that base. We have the access coordinates."

From a drawer in his desk, Clark took out a folded map and spread it out before Patrick. It was a map of Antarctica, clearly marking the part of the continent known as Neuschwabenland. In the north, in the coastal area opposite Cape Horn, the entrance was marked, with the corresponding coordinates of the supposed entrance to Base 211. The entrance was situated between Berkner Island and the Antarctic continent, on a narrow strip of the Weddell Sea. The map also showed the surface assault points for Operation Highjump. There were three spearheads extending from south to north. One covered the east, another the centre and the last the west, with the apparent aim of driving the Germans towards the sea, leaving them with no other escape route.

—I don't dispute the difficulty of the mission, Patrick, but we understand that we need a military contingent to get in there and

destroy the base's defences and allow us to attack the Nazis and their futuristic weapons with full confidence from the ground. I won't deny that the mission is my idea and has received the immediate approval of the general staff and President Truman. It is top secret. Only you can do it.

—And what resources do I have to carry it out? —Patrick's question was inevitable.

"We know for certain that the Germans have had no further news of their submarine U-2193. The secrecy has been absolute. Its return to Antarctica should come as no surprise, even if it is several months later. We are convinced that this has happened before with other vessels," Clark watched closely for any reaction from Patrick to his proposal. We have decided that you will take on board a contingent of 50 commandos fully prepared for combat, with all their weapons and provisions. Your mission is to get them in there using the element of surprise and provide them with the necessary cover. Then get out of there as quickly as possible, waiting for the end of Operation Highjump in Antarctic waters. At that point, your existence will be known to all members of the operation. I ask nothing more of you.

"And nothing less... But the Germans aren't fools, Vincent —said Patrick, trying to voice his doubts—. How is it possible that one of their submarines arrived there almost a year and a half later, in December 1946? Where had it been all that time?

"What you're saying makes sense, Patrick," Clark said, sounding like a father trying to reassure his son before a very important exam. He couldn't help but admire Patrick and saw him more as a son than as a subordinate. "Whilst the submarine has been moored at the base in one of the air-raid shelters, we've sent messages using the ENIGMA machine on board, implying that it was still operational. Our special military coding unit did this, as the submarine had the codes to communicate with Base 211. That base is real, Patrick. There's an enemy contingent there."

"And have there been any replies?" Patrick seemed to regain some composure.

—Yes. Además se informó de la muerte del capitán Lippsmac in combat. Ten, this is communications dossier 136

that we've had with Base 211 so far. We want to stick to this plan, and now you're right in the thick of it too.

Clark opened his briefcase and handed Patrick a folder containing several numbered sheets, dating from the start of the communication. The communication had begun the very moment their group had handed the submarine over to the authorities in Norfolk. In other words, almost a month ago.

"Who's supposed to be in command of the submarine now?" Patrick asked, skimming through the messages.

"U-Bootoffizier Wolfgang Reith, Lippsmacher's second-in-command."

Clark looked at Patrick. He needed him desperately and knew that what he was asking of him was a high-risk mission. He could understand his doubts, but he was his man. Besides, he had made a very good impression on the high command at the last meeting.

"I'll have to put together another crew and include Reith in it..." Patrick was already getting into the swing of the mission.

—Yes... What's more, you'll be given German uniforms and handguns so you can enter Base 211 without arousing suspicion. We can count on two or three German crew members to work with us. It's in their interest to do so, as it will help them obtain a new identity in our country. I'm sure they have things to hide, but we don't mind as long as they cooperate properly.

"I see you've thought of everything, Vincent " Patrick put down the folder.

"We've tried not to leave anything out," Clark pointed to Patrick's holster. "I don't think that pistol you're carrying is regulation, but it'll do you fine," Clark smiled.

Patrick took out Captain Lippsmacher's Luger pistol. The eagles and swastikas on the mother-of-pearl grips gleamed brightly. Clark examined it closely.

"It's a sensational weapon," he added. "Take it, no problem."

"I was planning to," smiled Patrick, as he put it away again. "When are we setting sail? Are we going with the whole group? I'd like to know what you've got in mind for us..."

Clark stood up and bent over the Antarctic map on the table.

—The plan is for your submarine to set sail two months before the rest of the fleet. In fact, apart from the bigwigs you already know, no one else is aware of your existence or involvement. You'll need to send messages as you get closer to Antarctica. We are equipping the submarine with special HALLICRAFTERS R27dD and 1R45/ARR7 radio sets for this mission. They can operate on a single frequency, which I will receive in Norfolk.

—Messages to Base 211 will be sent via the ENIGMA machine, with a copy to me. I will become your sole point of contact. In fact, once you set sail, you will be German for all intents and purposes.

—I don't know whether to be pleased or not. It really is a far-reaching mission, Vincent.

"What's more, you'll have to follow a specific sea route," said Clark, stepping over to the world map on the office wall. "When you leave Norfolk, you must head towards Spain, then sail south along the coast off Portugal," he said, pointing to the points he was mentioning, "but always keeping close to the coast." Then you'll head for the Canary Islands, which belong to Spain, passing between the coast of Morocco and those islands. We'd like you to stop there to stock up on some fresh provisions. The island where you will stop is El Hierro, specifically the small port of La Estaca. It is the island situated furthest to the south-west of the archipelago. Not only is Spain a refuge for Nazis, but we know that spies and informers are active in the Canary Islands. Once you have set sail, your presence will be reported to the German community and they will pass the information on to the person we are interested in. You must then continue on to South Africa, skirting the African coast. You will pass Cape Town and, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, stop at Port Elizabeth to refuel. We are aware of the presence of small mercenary tanker ships carrying fuel and food, which still supply anyone who pays well and asks no questions. All of this takes place on the high seas, within international waters. You will need to notify Base 211 so that one of these tankers can wait for you outside Port Elizabeth. The news will spread once again and confirm your return journey to Antarctica.

Clark traced the route from South Africa to Antarctica with his pointer. Once he reached that point, he returned to the map on the table, which was much more accurate. With his finger, he pointed to a small

series of islands on the Trinidad Peninsula, just south of Cape Horn. The supposed entrance to Base 211 lay a long way from that point.

"There is a British surveillance base here that was set up in secret during the Second World War, under the code name Operation Tabarin. We would like you to report there."

'Do the Germans know about the existence of that British base?' asked Patrick.

—Yes, we know that the Germans are aware of the existence of the British observation post on Deception Island. Its exact location is 62° 55' south latitude and 60° 37' west longitude. It is a small island about 15 kilometres in diameter, on the Trinidad Peninsula —Clark pointed to the tiny island on the map, shaped like a horseshoe open to the south—. You will attack the British base and let the German base know. That will help you.

—Vincent, England has always been our ally. We can't do this... —Patrick looked at Deception Island on the map.

"The British haven't told us they have that base. They're keeping it secret." Besides, it will be a German attack," Clark spoke firmly, emphasising the word 'German'. "I'm not asking you to weigh up a decision politically or humanely; that's not your job. It may cost a few British lives, but it will have been worth it. It's the best way to make a grand entrance into Base 211, which is your objective."

Patrick knew he couldn't argue with an order. He recalled his grandfather John Philip Malone's words on the matter. Clark continued:

"It'll be a surface attack, using the ship's guns. Nothing more. Just that – don't worry. We want the submarine to be clearly visible, leaving no doubt as to its origin."

After a few seconds of silence, Patrick asked:

"And if we come across an allied American, British or Russian ship, must we sink that too?"

—If it's in self-defence, yes. You mustn't seek out an allied ship and sink it. Those aren't the orders, but you can attack if the situation gets difficult for you —Clark left no room for doubt—. You're Germans —he finished with a smile.

"Once inside Base 211, what's it like?" Patrick looked at Clark. "Do we have any information?"

"We don't know. Nor do we know the depth of the cavern. On that part of the plan, we'll have to see what the Germans collaborating with us know and improvise as we go along. There isn't much else, Patrick," Clark shrugged. "Our interrogation teams didn't get any information from the submarine crews on that point. It seemed as though none of them had ever been inside."

—Actually, we don't know what's in there, or how it's structured, or the defence or control systems... —Patrick added with a touch of despair.

"That's right. I'm not going to lie to you. But you're travelling in a German submarine, and that gives you a certain advantage." Clark sat down in his office chair. He lit a cigar, the aroma of which quickly filled the room. Patrick lit a cigarette. He'd never been able to smoke the cigars his ex-father-in-law enjoyed; they made him feel queasy.

"Choose the best possible crew and take that submarine there. Carry out the mission and return with all your men," Clark stared at him intently. "The assault group will join you on the high seas between South Africa and Antarctica. It doesn't make sense for them to make the entire journey aboard the submarine. They are the best, and so are you." Your part is more decisive than the air and land assault of Operation Highjump. Victory will depend on you.

Patrick felt overwhelmed by the news and by what was expected of him and his men.

—Start thinking about and preparing everything you'll need, such as provisions, ammunition, fuel, water, *and so on.* You still have time, but don't get complacent. Try to get to know the submarine and the German crew you've chosen well. Much of your success will depend on them. Familiarise yourselves thoroughly with the ENIGMA machine and the HALLICRAFTERS R274D and 1 R45/ARR7 equipment specially selected for the mission; these will be your means of contact with me and with Base 211. That's all, soldier. We'll see each other in a month's time. I've got other matters to attend to regarding Highjump.

"Very well, Vice-Admiral Clark," said Patrick with a touch of sarcasm.

Clark smiled. He liked a certain sense of humour. He had complete confidence in Patrick. They both stood up and Clark accompanied Patrick to the door.

Chapter 10

PREPARATIONS FOR OPERATION HIGHJUMP

Since early 1946, Antarctica had been a source of deep fascination for the human imagination across almost the entire planet. In January, press reports revealed that Lincoln Ellsworth had plans to map the South Pole by land and air. That same month, the famous aviator Eddie Rickenbacker urgently called for an American expedition to the Antarctic continent, including the use of atomic bombs to bring to light the rich and unknown mineral resources that appeared to exist there. Fortunately, Professors Ellickson and Gordon responded swiftly that the use of atomic material would render the entire continent 'impractical'.

In early summer, the British Empire Scientific Conference proposed two expeditions to Antarctica. By late autumn, it had become known that the Dutch and Russians were preparing large whaling fleets. There were even rumours that the British had sent a secret expedition to occupy Byrd's East Base, from the 1940–41 expedition at the foot of the Antarctic Peninsula in Margarita Bay.

In early November, the New York Times ran a headline stating that "six nations were competing for Antarctica and its uranium deposits". Admiral Byrd, at a press conference on 12 November 1946, had to refute this claim, saying that "The Navy categorically denies reports that our mission is a race to find

uranium in Antarctica. When this expedition was first discussed, uranium was not even mentioned. For all these reasons, that statement is incorrect".

Byrd's comments at his press conference made it clear to any keen observer that the primary objectives of Operation Highjump were military. The question observers were asking was: how far did the military intend to go with this operation? Testing military equipment under extreme conditions only answered part of the question.
'Why now?' wondered others who did not understand the interest and haste in carrying out the entire operation.

The Soviet Union, which closely monitored every move made by its rival in the world, took a keen interest in the operation, as indicated in its naval newspaper *Red Fleet*, where it stated that, following Admiral Byrd's press conference, the measures the United States intended to implement in Antarctica confirmed that American military circles sought to bring the southern polar regions under their control and establish permanent military bases for their armed forces.

Soviet-American relations deteriorated rapidly during 1946, due to the interest shown by the Americans in the two polar regions and the growing Russian anxiety over the situation. Soviet military analysts believed that, in the event of a possible Third World War between capitalism and communism, the North Pole would be a strategic battlefield in the initial phase, followed by the South Pole. For this reason, it was very important for the Americans to train their troops in an extreme environment, very different from other theatres of operations around the world.

The American political climate of 1946 also played a very important role in the planning of Operation Highjump. After the Second World War, many politicians were discussing the possibility of a single military command that would bring together the entire armed forces across its three branches: land, sea and air. It would be a Department of National Defence. At first, the Navy agreed with this approach, but they soon realised that their service might be controlled by the young and arrogant officers of the Air Force. It seemed they had a plan to turn the Navy into a mere coastguard. By mid-1946, the admirals

They were looking for a way to justify the navy's effectiveness; the anxiety surrounding the onset of the 'Cold War' provided an opportunity for a major expansion into polar exploration, which enjoys a positive public image.

One of the first outcomes of this naval plan was Operation Frostbite during the winter of 1945–46. A group of ships accompanied the new aircraft carrier Midway to Davis Strait, near the coast of Greenland, where the naval capabilities of men and equipment could be tested. Amidst a raging sea and unbearable blizzards, it was proven that this type of operation in a climatically demanding theatre was possible. However, Operation Frostbite did not go further north, to the Pole itself, and so it can be said that the conditions tested were not as extreme as one might imagine. It was also necessary to supplement the test with a longer stay in those conditions. Antarctica was the ideal location for this new test.

Another very important development, which was in line with the Navy's quest for prestige and efficiency, took place on 12 February 1946, when the United States Congress passed Public Law 296, instructing the head of the US Meteorological Office to establish a permanent base in the Arctic regions of the Western Hemisphere. This office approached the Army and the Navy, and together they drew up a plan to build two meteorological stations at Thule, Greenland, and at the southern tip of Melville Island, in the Canadian Arctic. The Navy did a great job, but it needed something more, and above all, something more important.

Of all the forces, interests and figures involved in the Navy's decision to carry out Operation Highjump, none was as important or decisive as Admiral Byrd. Byrd's fame had not grown during the war, as he did not participate directly, nor did he command ships or troops. He was a special assistant to Admiral Ernest J. King and, of course, remained, as he had been for years, a personal friend of President Roosevelt. Between 1941 and 1945, he travelled extensively throughout Europe, Alaska and the North Pacific, carrying out important but little-known work for the Navy. It is known that he even commanded a small squadron of torpedo boats—

surveys in the South and South-West Pacific, with the aim of identifying suitable sites for building airfields for the rapidly advancing forces of MacArthur and Halsey.

But as has been said, the famous Antarctic admiral of the 1930s never commanded a battleship, an aircraft carrier or a destroyer squadron against the Japanese fleet. He never engaged in direct combat, nor did he bear the brunt of battle. His fame during the war was eclipsed by the new commanders of the MacArthur, Halsey, Patton or Doolittle ilk, who had teams of public relations experts who knew how to 'sell' their exploits to the general public – exploits that were sometimes exaggerated, but which earned them enormous popularity and renown. Operation Highjump would be Byrd's military revenge against all those famous military figures, who, after the war, had lost some of their popularity.

Admiral Byrd knew how to go about securing the political support and financial backing needed for Operation Higlajump, as was the case with Senator Harry Flood Byrd, the admiral's brother, amongst others. At that time, Harry was the driving force behind the powerful family political machine that had sustained the Democratic Party in Virginia. Harry was a key figure among the Democrats of the so-called 'Deep South' in the 1930s and 1940s. He also wielded considerable influence in the House of Representatives and over numerous presidents, particularly the most recent ones. As one might imagine, Harry gave his political backing to his brother Richard's plan to return to Antarctica.

Byrd's financial dealings continued at various levels, and the question of how the Navy's High Command managed to persuade Congress to fund an expedition as costly as Highjump remains shrouded in mystery. The Navy had not been involved in a polar mission since the expeditions of Charles Wilkes in the 19th century. One can assume that the United States was excited by the idea of undertaking the largest Antarctic expedition in history, in peacetime and without, apparently, the possibility of death or destruction. Added to this was the Soviet threat of a possible Arctic war, which, following Highjump, would set things straight and make it clear, politically and militarily, who was the world's leading power on all fronts.

In any case, and despite these significant initiatives, for the American military personnel, soldiers and sailors involved in Operation Highjump, the Christmas period from 1945 to 1946 passed all too quickly. There was a great deal of work ahead. But the operation faced a pressing reality: the demoralisation that was eating away at the large American naval bases in the wake of the Second World War.

As mentioned earlier, at a historic moment in
As global political tensions mounted, the world's largest fleet was being dismantled without a second thought. A vast fleet of battle-hardened ships, which only a year earlier had secured victory across the globe and which covered an average of one ship for every forty square nautical miles, was being systematically torn apart.

In the calm waters of the vast military harbours lay the enormous battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers and hundreds of destroyers. They were practically new ships, with no more than ten years of service. Now, after a few years of combat, they were condemned to a life of inactivity in those harbours. The United States Navy was becoming a shadow of its former self.

The crews who had served on those ships and had now returned to civilian life once more bid them farewell with a touch of nostalgia, whilst a handful of professional sailors remained behind, frustrated and demoralised by a Congress that offered few jobs within the fleet.

But the sadness that prevailed at the Norfolk base and throughout the American naval establishment partly disappeared in early 1946. The follow-up meeting on 15 March 1946 took place without a hitch and with the necessary approvals from the President and the United States Congress. The admiral
D.C. Ramsey, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations at the Pentagon, who attended the meeting, set the plan in motion immediately. An incredible series of orders for the Navy arrived from Washington, signed by the admiral. They were addressed to the commanders-in-chief of the Pacific and Atlantic fleets and set out an Antarctic Development Project intended to be carried out at the South Pole during the polar summer. These

orders the operational name that Admiral Nimitz had proposed: Operation Highjump.

The directive set out in the orders was to prepare ships and personnel for a stay in Antarctica. The plans to be examined involved sailing along the entire Antarctic coastline and establishing an American base on the coast of the Ross Sea, near the Little America III base, which Admiral Byrd had established during his 1940–1941 expedition. Whilst the base was being built under the name Little America IV, a systematic radial aerial survey would be carried out using seaplanes and, later, conventional aircraft once the aforementioned base had been completed.

Although Ramsey's orders did not specify this, the main objective of Operation Highjump was to map and photograph as much of Neuschwabenland as possible and to look for signs of enemy activity in the 2nd Division, in order to subsequently determine the scope of the attack to be carried out. Nor was the search for uranium forgotten; this would be the second phase of the operation once German resistance had been crushed, with Little America IV set to become the major American base in the future.

The planners designed a camp comprising 200 tents, with two large heated shelters for emergencies and two large radio communication towers to liaise with the distant United States, observation and attack flights, and ships stationed around the Antarctic perimeter. The 'Seabees', who had earned a fine reputation during the war, were to be in charge of building Little America IV. They had constructed numerous airfields, ports and bases in the Pacific that helped win the war on that front. The planned number of 'Seabees' for Operation Highjump was set at 168 men. But when they assembled at Port Hueneme, California, on 1 November 1946, it was discovered that only 49 men were sufficiently trained for the job. The rest were mere assistants with little experience. According to the official report, these men received 'all possible training'. But time was short, and this created tension between the experienced and the novices in the 'Seabees' group.

Admiral Ramsey's subsequent orders of August 1946 clearly specified the fleet and the number of men required. Seven weeks later, on 15 October, Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, appointed Captain Richard H. Creuzen – Byrd's companion on other voyages to Antarctica – as commander of Operation Highjump. In this new post, Creuzen was ordered to prepare the operation in detail.

The idea was that military activity would cease following the surrender of the German garrison, when the weather and ice would no longer permit further activity until the following summer. A detachment of ships and men would remain there until relieved. This meant they would have no more than three months to resolve the situation in Antarctica; after that, they would have to wait. Two days later, Creuzen issued his initial orders for the operation, which indicated his interest in establishing a base on the coast of the Ross Sea, in order to extend the explored area of the continent and test the equipment under extreme cold conditions. Creuzen also specified in detail the fleet of ships that would take part—which included vessels from both the Pacific and Atlantic fleets—and their division into different groups.

Creuzen's meticulous plan had divided the attack force into five groups as follows:

Admiral Richard E. Byrd — Commanding Officer of Task Force 68.

Commander Richard H. Creuzen — Commander of Task Force 68.

CENTRAL GROUP (Task Group 68.1)
Commander Richard H. Creuzen, in charge of the ships:
Command and communications ship USS MOUNT OLYMPUS
Supply ship USS YANCEY
Supply ship USS MERRICK Submarine
USS SENNET Icebreaker USS
BURTON ISLAND Icebreaker USS
NORTHWIND

GROUP OBJECTIVE: To break through the ice of the Ross Sea and reach Whale Bay, establishing the Little America IV military camp near the first bases set up by Byrd on previous expeditions. This would be the most important airfield of the entire operation. The aircraft carrier Philippine Sea would provide logistical support to this group.

WESTERN GROUP (Task Group 68.2)
Captain Charles A. Bond, in command of the ships:
Seaplane tender USS CURRITUCK 3
Martin Mariner PBM seaplanes Destroyer
USS HENDERSON
Oiler and supply ship USS CACAPON

GROUP OBJECTIVE: To assemble in the Balleny Islands and from there proceed westwards, circumnavigating Antarctica, until meeting up with the Eastern Group. To eliminate any enemy armed resistance that may be encountered.

EAST GROUP (Task Group 68.3)
Captain George J. Dufek, in command of the ships:
Seaplane tender USS PINE ISLAND
3 Martin Mariner PBM seaplanes Destroyer
USS BROWNSON
Oiler and supply ship USS CANISTEO

GROUP OBJECTIVE: To assemble at Peter I Island and from there proceed to the Greenwich Meridian. Eliminate any enemy armed resistance that may appear.

CARRIER GROUP (Task Group 68.4)
Aircraft carrier USS PHILIPPINE SEA — Attached to the Central Operations Group

BASE GROUP — LITTLE AMERICA IV (Task Group 68.5)
Commander Clifford M. Campbell — Main base of the Central Operations Group

On 20 November, just two weeks before the departure of the first units, Creuzen issued a supplementary order, setting out the staggered departures of the ships from the bases in San Diego, California, and Norfolk, Virginia. It also specified the troops to be embarked and the allocation of equipment per ship. The order mentioned that the new aircraft carrier 'Philippine Sea' would form part of the Antarctic expedition. The aircraft carrier's mission would be to carry six R4D heavy transport and bomber aircraft, a military version of the DC3, whose crews would be responsible for the reconnaissance and air strikes assigned to the Little America base, which was to be built on the coast of the Ross Sea. Admiral Byrd himself would be on board the aircraft carrier, would fly to the new base and assume the role of scientific commander of the operation. He would attempt to reach the South Pole itself in one of those aircraft, a feat that had not yet been achieved. The general public was enthusiastic about Byrd's adventure, which in reality concealed a large-scale attack and would be his baptism of fire.

The Navy insisted that Highjump would be, above all, a grand naval spectacle, with the Navy's interests taking precedence over any other considerations, such as scientific ones, for example. Admiral Ramsey's orders of 26 August 1946, cited above, stipulated that the head of Naval Operations would only meet with other government agencies that had some connection with Operation Highjump, and no one else. Nor did Ramsey envisage any diplomatic contacts or foreign observers on the mission. Consequently, there would be little room for scientists or any American civilians. Furthermore, Ramsey sent a letter to various government departments and agencies inviting them to participate in a very limited capacity.

The Ministry of the Interior, the Meteorological Office and the Coastal Geological Survey confirmed that observers had been dispatched. The scientific studies recommended under Operation Highjump included aerological measurements such as synoptic observations, weather radar, solar radiation intensity, etc., terrestrial magnetic observations, and aerial geological surveys, which included the search for uranium. Scientists such as Jack Hough, Bill Metcalf and David Barnes from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution were

present on the mission. However, science would be subordinate to the military establishment and its specific objectives.

The greatest scientific advance offered by the operation was the use of the trimetrogon photographic system, which provided a unique and modern means of interpreting and mapping the systematic aerial photography campaign. According to its leading expert, Thomas R. Henry, this system was based on the principles of precise calibration of time, altitude, depth and range. Five cameras were mounted on each aircraft. One of the cameras pointed directly downwards from the aircraft at a right angle, whilst two others pointed downwards but at a 30-degree angle to the horizontal. The fourth camera filmed the aircraft's internal controls, including a clock, whilst the fifth showed the aircraft's altimeter, via *echo* pulses, which continuously recorded the aircraft's altitude.

The five cameras operated automatically and simultaneously, being triggered several times a minute by a mechanism whose frequency depended on the aircraft's speed, its altitude and the complexity of the terrain it was flying over. Preliminary *calculations* showed that an aircraft equipped with this array of cameras could photograph around 50,000 square miles in six hours— , or, in other words, a round trip of 750 miles. This calculation was based on ideal conditions. The flight and photography team planners immediately decided that on each Antarctic flight, two aircraft should fly in parallel, separated by about 60 miles, so that their photographs could be overlaid and cross-checked. It was of particular importance in this part of the operation that, should significant features such as mountains, lakes, glaciers or any extraordinary geographical features be discovered, further flights would be dispatched to obtain more detailed photographs. If tunnels, vehicles, buildings or any anomaly indicating the presence of an enemy force were discovered, special flights carrying airborne troops would follow to make contact and neutralise the enemy.

The operation would make extensive use of radar, which would offer Antarctic explorers the advantage of being able to locate

and pinpoint enemy positions or features of the terrain that needed to be taken into account. Several helicopters would also assist with observation, location and rapid transport to any point of interest. The helicopters were equipped with magnetometers capable of determining the type of rock or subsoil beneath the ice sheet.

In the autumn of 1946, a conference was held at the Naval Hydrographic Office in Suitland, Maryland, to prepare nautical and navigation charts for Operation Highjump. It was soon realised that the British charts of the Ross Sea, produced by the British Admiralty, were the most reliable for planning Antarctic routes. These charts were reproduced and supplied to the ships taking part. The icebreakers Northwind and Burton Island would play a key role in using and navigating by these charts, clearing the way for the fleet. The Northwind was commanded by Captain Charles
W. Thomas, who, in Byrd's words, "was one of the finest polar sailors there was".

Between October and November 1946, the Navy continued preparations for Operation Highjump. Cruzen and his subordinates on both coasts of the United States had placed extensive orders with the quartermaster's department for fleece jackets, parkas, goggles, boots, gloves, thermal underwear, special tents, etc., and, above all, had worked on the design of Little America IV, which in the initial phase would be constructed using special tents, to be later replaced by buildings made from special panels designed for polar regions. At this stage, the press were cordially invited to view the preparations and materials, and several Navy officers even met with representatives from Metro Goldwyn-Mayer to plan and film a movie about the operation. The film was to be titled 'OPERATION HIGHJUMP: THE SECRET LAND' and would be narrated by Hollywood actor Robert Montgomery, who was a reserve Navy officer.

In the forests of New Hampshire, specialist trainers sent by Byrd began preparing the dog teams that would pull the sledges and, above all, training those who would lead and live alongside the animals, so that they might become familiar with

all their habits. In the factories of the Midwest, all manner of heavy vehicles taking part were being prepared. Many of them were surplus from the recently ended war and were sent on flatbed lorries to the ports of California or Virginia. The scale of the operation was spectacular, and the media reported on everything as it unfolded, although the messages reaching the general public inevitably had to pass through the filter of naval intelligence.

One concern for the planners, though one that was overshadowed by the atmosphere of euphoria, was the possibility that some ships might be lost amongst the ice floes. For the first time in Antarctica, the ships were to have steel hulls, and almost all were constructed from lightweight plates. Although steel is stronger than wood, it is more prone to cracking. Wooden hulls offer a flexibility that steel lacks. Furthermore, submerged ice peaks could tear a fatal gash in the steel. The experience of the Titanic cast a shadow over the planners facing this problem. Byrd himself, in 1929, successfully manoeuvred the steel-hulled ship Eleanor Bolling through the deadly ice of Antarctica. The thickness of the steel plating on this ship was much greater than that of the ships assigned to Operation Highjump.

As official knowledge of Antarctica and its natural challenges grew, ‘the well of ideas was running dry’, in Creuzen’s words. From the experience of men who had been to both poles and had learnt to survive in the most extreme conditions imaginable, it was clear that air operations would never be safe. There were no air corridors, no weather stations and no emergency airfields elsewhere. Everything depended on the pilots’ improvisation if anything went wrong. Many were reluctant at the idea of being on a military mission in Antarctica. The crews of the Martin Mariner PBMs, the R4Ds and the helicopters were assembled in Norfolk on 1 November 1946, a month before departure, to prepare and familiarise themselves with where they were to operate, with particular emphasis on the polar flight system, which differed from flying under normal conditions. The aircraft had undergone only a few minor modifications to adapt them to the Antarctic environment. That was all.

On 27 November, three Martin Mariner PBM seaplanes were transferred to the US Navy base in San Diego, California, to be deployed aboard the USS Currituck, whilst the remaining three seaplanes were deployed aboard the USS Pine Island in Norfolk. These aircraft each carried 600 gallons of fuel to enable the engines to be started during the voyage and kept running without freezing. On both ships, one of the seaplanes had to be partially dismantled so that all three aircraft could be installed on the deck without protruding over the ship's side. In any case, and as an anecdote regarding this problem, when the USS Pine Island reached the waters of the Panama Canal, it had to disembark the three aircraft, which landed at Balboa on the west side, in order to pass through the canal without any problems.

On 25 November 1946, more than 5,000 men—including sailors and assault troops—along with their ships, weaponry, aircraft, supplies and plans, set off into the unknown.

Chapter 11

VISIT TO THE SAN DIEGO NAVAL BASE

After identifying himself at the access control point, Patrick entered the enormous, air-raid-proof submarine dock at the Norfolk base. Amongst several American submarines such as the one under his command, the USS Monitor, and which were undergoing maintenance, the submarine U-2193 stood out in all its splendour. It easily stood out from the rest, which beside it looked like relics of the past and, above all, much smaller. He stopped in front of it, recalling the journey from Buenos Aires.

"Good morning, sir," said an officer, standing to attention before Patrick. "I am Petty Officer Garrett, and you must be Captain Patrick Malone, in command of the U-2195. How can I assist you, sir?"

Garrett seemed to know who he was talking to.

"Thank you, Petty Officer Garrett," replied Patrick, tipping his peaked cap with two fingers. "I'd like to go on board and see how the interior refurbishment work is coming along."

"No problem, sir. Follow me, sir."

Garrett walked ahead of Patrick and led him up the gangway to the submarine's deck. Several sailors were loading torpedoes through the hatches at *the* stern, and several crates of food and other provisions were also being brought onto the vessel.

"I see you're making good progress, Petty Officer Garrett," said Patrick, pointing to the various men carrying the boxes.

"Yes, sir. In fact, it'll be ready to set sail this week. We're on schedule," smiled Garrett.

We've also carried out the hull treatment and maintenance on the engines, shafts and propellers. You won't have any)orob1ema. We've kept the original paintwork and identification number. It's still German. Follow me, Captain Malone.

They entered the hangar through the side door of the turret. Inside, they passed several workers who were carrying out their duties. Patrick remembered exactly which areas they were passing through. The entire telecommunications area had undergone some changes due to the installation, alongside the ENIGMA machine and other German transmission equipment, of the American HALLICRAFTERS R27dD and 1 RD 5/ARR7 sets. That was to be John 'Bullet' Creighton's second. A RAK-6 radio had also been installed alongside the equipment, capable of Morse code on low and medium frequencies at 16–600 kHz, and voice messages on frequencies between 300 kHz and 23 MHz. The installation was completed by a wide-range RAL frequency tracker. The best American technology available at the time had been installed.

Garrett showed Patrick a list of the modifications that had already been carried out and those that still needed to be done. In fact, apart from ammunition and torpedoes, food, water, other standard supplies, space for the 50 commandos who would embark on the high seas, and the HALLICRAFTERS R2 74D, 1 R45/ARR7 and RAK-6 communication system, everything else remained the same.

'Did you change all the battery packs?' asked Patrick, as this was something that always concerned any good submariner.

"It wasn't necessary, sir," Garrett leaned in confidentially. "And, between you and me, they're far better than ours. The whole charging system works 100%. You shouldn't have any problems. That illuminated control panel is a brilliant idea."

They entered the engine room with its powerful diesel engines and Walter turbines.

"It's all as good as new, sir," Garrett continued admiringly. "We've picked up some interesting ideas for our submarines."

"I'm glad to hear it, Petty Officer Garrett. In any case, I'd like to carry on on my own now, as I have some things to prepare in the submarine's officers' mess. Thank you for your help."

"Right, sir. If you need anything, I'll be on the gangway," replied Garrett obligingly.

Patrick walked down the corridor to the officers' mess. Once there, after sitting down, he placed his briefcase on the table and took out several documents. It was time to decide which men he would take with him on the mission. Of course, he was counting on all his comrades who had made the journey from Buenos Aires to Norfolk and who were already part of the crew of his submarine, the USS Monitor. He had no doubts, and they already had experience with the model
XXI. He was considering taking a few more American crew members, for key positions on the submarine *such as* the engines, the radio or the torpedo tubes. The problem lay with the German crew. After much consideration, he decided it would be best to rely solely on Wolfgang Reith and Georg Böse for bridge duties, particularly once in Antarctica. The rest, who had also made the journey, would not be needed on this occasion. He would replace them with American crew members.

A number of doubts were plaguing him. If he was counting on the two Germans, they would need to be fully briefed on many aspects of the operation and willing to cooperate with the United States. They would be entrusted with a highly sensitive part of the mission, which would take place once inside Base 211. Would they be willing to betray their compatriots? Would they fight against Base 211?
Would Reith and Böse cooperate and give him all the information needed to reach the entrance to the German base without any problems? And once there, would they play along? He didn't have much room for manoeuvre and was clear that he wanted to count on them. The truth is that during the last part of the journey, Reith was very talkative and cooperative. He even went into secret details. Böse caused no trouble whatsoever during the whole trip and was friendly to everyone. He had left a good impression.

The German crews captured in the months following the war were held in various locations. The crew of the submarine U-2193 was at the naval base in San Diego, whilst those of U-530 and U-977 were at Charles Street Prison in Boston. According to the latest reports, the latter were to be repatriated very soon. Their period of detention had already ended. Only the captains of both vessels would remain a little longer,

but only due to bureaucratic formalities. The two submarines had been sunk during ballistic tests off the coast of the Norfolk base a few months earlier. Only U-2193 remained in American hands, as a submarine captured after the war.

Patrick was to travel to California to interview the two selected men and gauge the extent of their commitment. He also needed to take along some 'carrot' to encourage their cooperation. Vice-Admiral Clark had given him plenty of leeway to decide what reward might appeal to the selected men. Patrick had thought of granting them American citizenship, including new identities, and bringing their families from Germany to California, where they could be offered a job at the submarine base in San Diego itself or in some other role related to the Navy.

After making his decision, he glanced at his watch. It was already It was 12.15 and he had arranged to have lunch with Betty, Vice-Admiral Clark's secretary, at a restaurant off the base. Betty had the afternoon off and preferred to have lunch with him outside the military premises. He agreed. The truth was that he felt at ease with her and she was very kind to him. His military duties and the missions entrusted to him had not left him much time to get to know other women. Since his separation, now two years ago, his work had helped him a great deal to forget his ex-wife. He had always felt a certain sense of guilt over the fact that Martha had left him and joined the sect, which seemed to give her what he had been unable to offer. His father-in-law had always supported him and had been against his daughter throughout the whole affair. He set off for the meeting place.

Betty was already there and, as always, looked stunning. Although she was in uniform, she wore it with such grace that it didn't detract from her femininity in the slightest. She seemed delighted to see him, and he felt the same way. He couldn't hide it. They sat down at a table for two and, after ordering their food, began chatting about all sorts of things. They seemed nervous. Patrick thought that this situation made him feel more on edge than if his submarine were being pursued by a Japanese destroyer. He chuckled to himself at the comparison. He was surely beginning to feel something deep for Betty, and that made him nervous. She

sensed this, and she liked being admired by Patrick. She, too, liked that handsome submarine officer.

When they had finished eating, they went into the centre of Norfolk and strolled through the old quarter by the civilian harbour. It was cold, and Patrick draped his jacket over her shoulders. At one point, Betty took Patrick's hand, and he, after stopping, kissed her passionately. There was nothing more to say.

The American crew of U-2193 were delighted to be back in action and were *as* follows:

BRIDGE AND HELMS
Patrick Malone
Kenneth Miele
Bert Eklund
Peter Higgins

ENGINE ROOM
Stan White
Roger Blaufen
Tex Jenkins
Cliff Tubb

TORPEDO ROOM
Johnny Allen,
Dave Holms,
George Connors

RADIO ROOM
John 'Bullet' Creighton
Eric Jones

KITCHEN
Allan Perkins

DOCTOR
Philip Louis Hill

Patrick thought it was a good selection. He knew he could have had more volunteers, but he didn't want to leave the USS Monitor without a crew. He wanted enough men to be able to manoeuvre the U-2193 without any problems and with every precaution in place. It also had to be borne in mind that the 50 commandos from the assault group would be joining them near Antarctica, and that meant space and provisions on board. Now he had to convince the Germans. Vice-Admiral Clark agreed with Patrick's proposal and offered him the full support of the base to ensure its successful completion.

The selected crew began to familiarise themselves with the submarine, particularly the new recruits John 'Bullet' and Eric Jones, who were getting to grips with their modern radio equipment and the German ENIGMA cipher machine. A number of short sorties were carried out within the base's military waters. The submarine performed flawlessly in the various tests it underwent. The new recruits highlighted the innovations it incorporated and, above all, the bathrooms and
‹•1 air-conditioning system, which proved the most popular
.

February and March flew by. April was the month chosen to travel to the San Diego base and meet with Reith and Böse. Patrick took Roger Blaufen and his second-in-command, Kenneth Miele, along because of their knowledge of German, so as not to miss a single detail. After a flight in a military aircraft lasting almost 14 hours, they arrived in sunny California. The San Diego base was also quite large, like Norfolk, and was the main base for the US Pacific Fleet. There was a great deal of activity throughout the military installation. Patrick and Miele had been there on previous occasions and were familiar with it all.

During the Second World War, the base was renamed from San Diego Destroyer Base to San Diego Naval Repair Base, reflecting not only its expansion but also the change in its activities. During the war, more than 43,000 sailors and officers were trained in repair work and more than 5,000 ships were converted, repaired and upgraded, including repairs for combat damage. After the war, the name was changed again to its final designation: San Diego Naval Base. This was

due to the increase in its activities and, above all, to provide support for the ships of the Pacific Fleet.

The base served as the headquarters for more than 60 Navy vessels and for over 50 separate units whose mission was to provide specialist support to the fleet in all matters relevant to its operation. These units included, for example, the Fleet Training Centre, Naval Dental Centre, Office of Legal Services, Intermediate Maintenance Activities, Centre for Supervision of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, Naval Training and Education Centre, Engineering and Systems Centre, Fleet Industrial Supply Centre, Naval Research Service, etc.

The base was commanded by Commodore James E. Boak, who kindly received the three visitors in his office.

"Captain Malone, welcome to San Diego Base." Boak stood up and walked over to the door of his office; Donnie Patrick and his men were waiting for permission to enter.

"Good morning, Commodore Boak," Patrick shook hands with his host and, accompanied by his colleagues, entered the office. "I'd like to introduce the men on my team who will be accompanying me to the meeting with the Germans. They are Roger Blaufen and Kenneth Miele"—both men greeted Commodore Boak—"They speak German fluently and will be of great assistance."

—I am fully aware of the reason for your visit, Captain. Vice-Admiral Clark has briefed me in detail. We will provide you with all the assistance you may require. During your stay in San Diego, you will be accompanied by my second-in-command, Lieutenant James P. Mallory, who will take you to the base's military prison, where the German crew is being held. Whatever you need, he is your man," smiled Boak.

'How are the German prisoners faring, Commodore?' Patrick sat down alongside his men and the Commodore in some comfortable armchairs.

'They've cooperated during the interrogations, but I don't think they've told us everything. The truth is, they haven't caused any trouble so far. I can tell you that, naturally, they want to return to Germany, but they feel overwhelmed by the situation,' the commodore sat up in his armchair. 'The most surprising thing of all is that

Whilst here, they have become aware of the enemy they were facing. Their political propaganda had portrayed our country as the epitome of misfortune, chaos and a fragmented society incapable of defending itself or fighting for a common cause. They are astonished by their naivety.

'That is very interesting information, Commodore Boak. I think it could help us encourage them to consider collaborating with the United States.' Patrick looked at his colleagues, who nodded in agreement.

"On Vice-Admiral Clark's orders, all the German crew members' uniforms have been washed and tidied up. You can imagine what state they were in after months at sea. They're in boxes so they can be taken to Norfolk — it seemed Boak was unaware of the final destination of all that clothing. Hand-held weapons, such as pistols and machine guns, have also been inspected, oiled and serviced so they can be taken to the base.

Boak stood up and walked over to a cupboard behind his desk, from which he took out a wooden box, which he promptly handed to Patrick.

'Here are those men's decorations. You must take them to the Vice-Admiral.'

Patrick and his men opened the box, which, as Boak had said, contained several German medals and insignia from the submarine service. Silently, they took out some of the items, among which the Iron Cross stood out; there were several of them, both first and second class. Despite the crew's youth, they had not lacked courage or combat experience. Those insignia bore witness to that.

"Very well, Commodore Boak. So be it," Patrick *closed* the wooden box. "If that's all right with you, we'll get on with our work. My plan is to return to Norfolk as soon as possible, but we'll devote as much time as necessary to our mission."

"Perfect, Captain Malone," Boak stood up and telephoned his secretary to ask Lieutenant James P. Mallory to report to his office. Shortly afterwards, there was a knock at the door and Boak's secretary entered to say that the lieutenant was there. Mallory came in and, after being introduced by Boak, greeted everyone present. He seemed like a decent bloke.

Commodore Boak dismissed the whole group, who immediately set off to begin their work. A *car* picked them up at the building's entrance, as the distances were immense.

'Those sailors are fed up with being here,' Mallory began to say as the car pulled away.

"I'm not surprised; they've been here nearly a year," Patrick agreed. Mallory continued:

"They haven't caused any trouble, though they haven't had much freedom of movement either. They're in the internal prison and only spend time together during yard time and in the canteen."

The car continued to the prison gate. It was a cloudy day and the prison building did not stand out from the outside as such. It looked like any other building. When they entered, after identifying themselves, they realised it was a military prison. They were received by the prison commander, Captain Thomas A. Pemberton. They arrived just as the inmates were coming out into the central courtyard of the facility. In addition to American sailors who had committed some sort of offence, there were also Japanese prisoners there. It was curious to see that mix of men.

Mallory and the prison commander, Pemberton, led the group to a room where they could conduct the interviews. A fairly large rectangular table and some spartan chairs were the only furnishings in the room. A ceiling fan stood out, turning slowly and somewhat noisily, along with two high windows, without bars, which let in the powerful Californian sun. Patrick and his colleagues took their seats in the centre of the table, leaving their briefcases on the floor after taking out documents that might be useful for their meeting.

"Captain Pemberton, we need to see the inmates Wolfgang Reith and Georg Böse, please. I must also ask you, given the highly confidential nature of our visit and what we need to discuss with the prisoners, to leave us alone with them. I'm sorry, but these are Vice-Admiral Clark's orders."

'Don't worry, Captain Malone,' Mallory interjected, whilst Pemberton reinforced his words with a slight nod

. ‘We had already been informed of that possibility. The two inmates you wish to see will be here shortly.’

The two officers disappeared through the entrance door in search of the two Germans.

Patrick looked at his companions:

‘I don’t know if you’ve taken kindly to that order, but that’s how it is.’

“Don’t worry, Patrick,” said Kenneth. “They’re not going to question an order, and the matter is so confidential that it makes sense they’re not here with us. It’s all coming from the very top.”

The three of them were preparing some reports and also some notepads to jot down the most interesting points that might come up.

“You know I’m interested in anything they say to each other in German. Böse doesn’t speak English very well. I don’t want to miss a single detail.”

Patrick wanted to make this perfectly clear and knew he could trust his colleagues. Kenneth and Miele prepared themselves for active listening. The door opened at that moment and an MP entered, followed by the two Germans and two more MPs bringing up the rear. Then Pemberton and Mallory came in again, saying goodbye to Patrick and his colleagues.

“They’ll let us know when they’re finished. We’re at your disposal.”

They withdrew, followed by the MPs. They were left alone with the two German submariners.

The three stood up and greeted their former travelling companions warmly. No one would have guessed they’d once been enemies. They looked well, though they were now dressed in the standard prison uniform of navy blue trousers and a lighter blue shirt. An identification number on the left side of their chests completed the submariners’ new look.

“It’s a pleasure to see you both again. I mean that, my friend Reith,” Patrick began.

Reith smiled somewhat stiffly.

“Captain Malone, we’re fed up with our stay here. We’re not criminals, just soldiers, and yet we can’t return to Germany.”

“I’m aware of the circumstances and I’m sorry. For now, this is how it has to be, but I don’t think it will be for much longer. I can

to report that the crews who also surrendered in Argentina are currently on their way home.

Although Böse's English was better, Reith translated the words Patrick's words. A certain calm seemed to appear on the faces of the two seasoned submariners.

Patrick invited the whole group to sit down, although Reith was faster.

"We're pleased to see you too. It's been several months since our journey from Argentina," the three nodded in agreement with Reith's words, "but we don't understand the reason for your visit and why you wanted to see us two in particular."

The question left no room for doubt.

"I won't beat about the bush, gentlemen," said Patrick, resting his elbows on the table and clasping his hands in front of his face. "I've always remembered those words you spoke to me aboard the U-2195, about the Antarctic fortress known as Base 211. I must admit I didn't give your words much credence, Reith, but several events have since occurred that confirm much of your account

—Reith translated what Patrick was saying into German, although Böse seemed to be indicating that he understood what was being said.—For the United States, the existence of that base and everything it contains represents a real threat. We don't know what's there or the extent of the threat, but we cannot allow it.

'And what do you intend to do? Attack Base 211?' Reith asked bluntly.

Patrick knew he couldn't lie, and he knew he had to make a strong impression at that moment.

'The largest Antarctic attack fleet in history is being assembled. Land, sea and air forces are being combined. Some five thousand men will take part in the attack. An aircraft carrier will even provide air support. We mean business, believe me.'

The Germans looked at each other in disbelief at these words.

"That sounds impressive, Captain Malone," said Reith. "Thank you for the information, but what do the two of us have to do with all this?"

"The attack is planned in the conventional manner and with the troops I have just mentioned. However, the mission entrusted to my men and me is different, as we will be participating…"

in the battle, but I'll leave that to the fleet in question. We'll use the submarine U-2193 to infiltrate Base 211 with an assault team, which will support and pave the way for the fleet's attack from the outside. Both on the journey there and to gain entry. Once we're inside the base, I'll need both of you.

Reith and Böse could not hide their surprise at the request.

"But that is treason against our country, Captain," said Böse in *broken* English.

Patrick was relentless:

"Your homeland, Germany, is currently in ruins. There is no one left of your political regime. You have enough work on your hands rebuilding it and making the world forget what Nazism has represented. You have fought for the wrong ideals and now you have the opportunity to make amends for your grave mistake. I am offering you a unique and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, believe me."

'What would our specific mission be, Captain?' asked Reith, more pragmatically.

Patrick liked the question, as it seemed to show active interest in the mission.

"I need you to board the ship with my men and keep in touch with Base 211 via the ENIGMA machine. We'll be making a few scheduled stops along the way, and I want you to be seen. Once at the base, you'll act as our decoy and will need to get the entrance gates opened without arousing suspicion."

"What's in it for us, Captain?" Reith once again showed his practical side.

"What do you think?" Patrick passed the question on to the Germans before explaining his offer. It might just work out.

Reith translated Patrick's words into German for Böse.

"What you're proposing comes as a complete surprise to us. Besides, it means the war continues for us, albeit on a different side, and that also means we'll return to Germany much later than our comrades."

—In a way, you could look at it that way. In any case, I need your answer quickly. We can't
to delay the mission. Are you interested or not? —Patrick knew that

he was pushing things, but he felt he had to do so under the circumstances.

Reith looked somewhat nervous.

—Please understand our situation, Captain Malone. We've been subjected to gruelling interrogations, we've been here for months, we've heard nothing from our families, and now, suddenly, you turn up again to propose something that throws our plans into disarray and delays our return to Germany. All this, not to mention that we could die on the mission you're proposing.

Patrick confirmed Reith's fears.

"What you say may well happen, Reith. I cannot guarantee that we will all return. Perhaps none of us will return; I do not wish to deceive you. My men and I face the same problem, but we are soldiers."

Reith continued:

—We've already been demobilised. The army is finished.
'And what of our families, Captain? I have a wife and three children in Kiel, and Böse has a wife and two children in Königsberg. You must understand our distress. The war is over and we have survived. Our loved ones are eagerly awaiting our return.'
—Böse silently endorsed his comrade's words.

Patrick considered that, having reached this point and seeing that the Germans were not strictly refusing to carry out the Antarctic proposal, but that their problem lay with their families and their uncertain future, he explained what he could offer them.

—I understand what you're saying, and we realise that my request goes beyond the call of duty. That is why I can assure you that if you cooperate with us and we carry out the mission without a hitch, you both and your families will become American citizens. As soon as you accept the mission and have been properly briefed, your families will be transferred to the United States and you will be able to meet them at the Norfolk base. Your families will want for nothing and will be under the protection of our government until our return from Antarctica. They will have every comfort; do not worry.

Patrick would effectively hold the two families hostage—albeit with every comfort and advantage—thereby ensuring the two men's full cooperation with the mission.

The offer was simply too tempting, especially given the situation in Germany at the time, with rationing and all manner of hardships faced by the civilian population. That offer represented a more secure future for all of them. America was the future. After a brief exchange in German between the two submariners, which Miele and Balufen discreetly confirmed to Patrick, the two brothers accepted the proposal. They were now part of Patrick's team.

I have orders from above that, having accepted our proposal, *as* has just happened, I must take them immediately to Norfolk to continue with the preparations. Honestly, I'm very pleased and I believe we'll be able to carry out the mission perfectly.

They congratulated one another and informed Pemberton and Mallory, who arrived shortly afterwards.

"These men are under my jurisdiction from this moment onwards," said Patrick, producing a document authorising him to take the two sailors back to Norfolk with them. He had it ready in case things went according to plan. Pemberton raised no objection and allowed the two men to say goodbye to their comrades and collect their few personal belongings. They were also given civilian clothes for the journey. Once all the official formalities were over, Mallory suggested they go for lunch and then pay their respects to Commodore Boak.

Their German comrades, who were to remain in prison, were told that they were being taken to Norfolk for questioning and that they would meet up with them again in Germany. They tried to cheer them up with the news of their imminent release. Blaufen confirmed to Patrick what the two Germans had told their comrades, so everything seemed to be going smoothly. Meanwhile, Mallory informed his guests that the military aircraft which would take them back to Norfolk was scheduled to depart at 6.00 pm from San Diego airport. The overnight flight would stop over in El Paso and Atlanta, arriving in Norfolk the following morning. The crates containing the German uniforms and weapons would already be on board the plane when they boarded. They would arrive in the early afternoon.

After a meal together, Reith approached Patrick as they entered the main building at the San Diego base to say goodbye to Commodore Boak.

‘I see he’d already got the paperwork ready to send us both to Norfolk. He was quite sure we’d agree,
weren’t you, Captain Malone?”

Patrick smiled slightly.

“I wasn’t entirely sure, Reith, but I think the offer was a very good one given the current circumstances for both you and your families in Germany. And, quite frankly, I think you’ve made a good decision. Now I expect your full commitment so that everything goes according to plan.”

Reith smiled too.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, Captain, but you’ll have our families as hostages at the Norfolk base whilst we carry out the mission. We have no choice but to cooperate with you.”

Patrick paused at Reith’s words.

—I’m sorry you feel that way. Don’t think of them as our hostages. We don’t see them that way. They will simply be in our care for the duration of the mission. They will lead a life just like any other American military family and will gradually settle into normal life on the base, as well as into social life. I have no doubt about that. Later, upon your return, you will all resume normal life and will surely find work on the base. All I ask of you is that you serve us well and help us destroy Base 211—nothing more. What you get in return far outweighs the fate that awaits so many Germans in the coming years. I repeat: you have struck a good deal by agreeing to this.

The conversation ended there, and Reith was forced to accept what had been said. Deep down, he didn’t believe that either Böse or he himself had done the right thing. Commodore Boak came out to greet them in the spacious lobby and accompanied them to his office. Deep down, he wanted them to leave quickly, as these ‘visitors’ had a direct line to the bigwigs and he didn’t want any trouble at his base. He was wary of this sort of visit and, above all, although Clark had informed him that they were coming, he didn’t know exactly what it was all about or why they were taking those two Germans in particular.

“Very well, Captain Malone,” Boak began. “I hope you’ve been able to carry out your work without a hitch.”

Patrick nodded.

'Everything went very well, and we just wanted to say goodbye to you personally and thank you for your help. Our flight leaves at 6.00 pm and we're running just a little late for the airport. I'd be grateful if you could inform Vice-Admiral Clark of our return. That's what he asked me to do.'

"No problem, and a vehicle will now take you to the airport," Boak said, looking at the two Germans in civilian clothes. "I hope you have a safe journey back to Germany."

The two men replied to Boak with a smile. Then the whole group left the main building and shortly afterwards an official car picked them up and took them to the airport.

There were signs of unusual activity in Norfolk. It seemed as though preparations were underway for Operation Lf ighjump. Materials of all kinds were arriving from the most unexpected corners of the United States. The installation of catapults and cranes on the ships for the aircraft and seaplanes was evident. The tests carried out confirmed that the system worked very well. Although Byrd, Creuzen and Nimitz had returned to base on occasion, Patrick and his men were already fully immersed in the preparations and the mission with the U-2193, and so there were no further meetings with the commanders. Clark was now their point of contact for all intents and purposes.

It was agreed with Vice-Admiral Clark that the submarine was to depart from Norfolk on 1 October 1946, and its arrival in Antarctica was scheduled for mid- to late December. At almost the same time as the surface fleet. Clark would keep them informed of the fleet's position and arrival during the voyage. Only the senior commanders were aware of the existence of U-2193 in Operation Highjump. Secrecy and discretion were to be absolute. Everything would be revealed at the end of the mission, following victory.

Patrick's men learnt some military orders in ‹German, as well as some words commonly used in military circles and, above all, within the naval world. They also learnt the names of the submarine's equipment and mechanisms in that language, so as to become familiar with those terms in case the need arose to ‹prove they were German at the various planned stops on the •/journey to Antarctica. In any case, it was a complex task and one that

Unless the situation became extremely critical, Reith, Böse, Blaufen or Miele would be responsible for speaking to anyone outside the submarine whilst the mission was underway. There could be no mistakes, and Base 211 must not be alerted to the trap. Everyone familiarised themselves with the uniforms they would wear during the voyage and the German sidearms they would have to display to anyone from outside the submarine.

To Reith and Böse, it was almost comical to see the Americans wearing Kriegsmarine uniforms and trying to behave like German sailors. The two Germans had completely changed their mindset and almost seemed American. They were playing their part, and for the time being, their cooperation was total. Patrick's team, too, had welcomed them enthusiastically and without distinction. By June 1946, the families of both men had arrived. In Georg Böse's case, it had been more complicated, as Königsberg lay entirely within the Polish-Soviet zone and it had been very difficult to locate his family and obtain the necessary permits for their departure from Germany. The Russians were very meticulous and did not understand the American interest in that ordinary family. They did not make it easy, but the intervention of Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, working discreetly behind the scenes, had smoothed out the bureaucratic problems with the communists.

It was a wonderful moment for the two Germans, and one that motivated them immensely. Not only had Patrick kept his word, but the arrangements for the two families in Norfolk exceeded any expectations they might have had. In fact, they were housed in two spacious and comfortable bungalows, equipped with all manner of appliances and amenities. They were given shopping vouchers for the base supermarket, where the two women and their children could scarcely believe their eyes at the vast array of products of every kind available to them. The difference *compared to* Germany at that time was unimaginable, and they were grateful for the good fortune they had enjoyed. Curiously, none of them wanted to know what their husbands were doing in exchange for all that. They preferred to enjoy the situation and live a life that Germany could not offer them for many years to come. And, above all, they thought of the children and their future. That could be the best possible situation and they were determined to make the most of it. That attitude helped their husbands a great deal

their husbands during the gruelling days of preparation and training on board the U-2193.

The summer of 19d6 had been hot, and September already seemed to be giving way to an autumn and winter that looked set to be cold. The entire region from north of New York to New Iriglaterra was characterised by extreme temperatures in both senses of the word. But whether in winter *or* summer, there was one common factor: the icy waters of the Atlantic. Survival training on the high seas was an ordeal for the members of Patrick's team, but absolutely essential for every submarine crew member. Unlike a conventional ship, the submarine's deck meant that a diver carrying out work on deck was at risk of falling overboard at the slightest swell. Although they were secured with ropes, the problem was rapid hypothermia in the water, which was *greatly* exacerbated in Antarctic waters. Therefore, they had to train in the worst conditions if they were to have any chance of survival.

John 'Bullet' turned up in front of Patrick completely soaked after passing the deep-sea drop test.

'I suppose you're pleased. The water was freezing,' he said, throwing his arms up in a gesture of helplessness and looking at himself.

'Don't worry, John, it could have been for real and now be thanking me for it,' replied Patrick with a smile.

'I'm a communications officer. I don't go out on deck unless we're at the quay. My situation isn't the same as the others'," stammered John, realising there was nothing he could do.

"Orders are orders, and that was the test we had for today. We've all passed it. Go and dry off and get changed," Patrick returned to his post in the tower alongside Miele, Böse and Fteith.

"These drills are a nuisance, but necessary," confirmed Iteith. "In the Kriegsmarine we did them all the time, and they've saved many lives at sea."

'Life on board a submarine is fundamentally different from that on other vessels,' added Miele. 'Something unbearable for any crew member is having to have their appendix removed

to prevent peritonitis, far from any port and without the facilities to perform the operation safely.

"We did it too, and that saved many lives as well," said Böse, whose English had improved considerably.

The thought of a crew member suffering from peritonitis caused by a perforated appendix was a terrifying prospect, as death was certain. This had been the case on submarines during the First World War, until the order was given to accept crew members who not only had *to be* in good general *health* and free from epilepsy and other conditions difficult to treat on board, but who also had to undergo the stipulated medical procedures and mandatory removal of the appendix.

"Set course for port, Kenneth," Patrick ordered his second-in-command.

"Yes, sir," replied Miele, tipping his American peaked cap with two fingers and heading for the bridge. The general atmosphere was good, and that helped a great deal. During these trials, they continued to wear their American uniforms. There were no problems, and they were far from any prying eyes. The restricted military zone off the coast of Norfolk was vast, and no other vessel was allowed to approach.

The submarine usually returned to base at dusk to avoid prying eyes or unexpected encounters with civilian vessels. During these trials, the American flag flew and the German code had been temporarily replaced by a US Navy code. Norfolk also informed them who was moving around the perimeter of the base and whether they should wait or could enter without any problems.

On each sortie, some kind of message was transmitted via the ENIGMA machine to maintain contact with the German base. Reith and Böse provided data and information typical of the Kriegsmarine, as well as a fictitious position that varied according to the messages. Norfolk also broadcast false sighting reports of U-2193 on frequencies that could be picked up from Antarctica, confirming the position given by the submarine. Base 211 was informed that the submarine was scheduled to arrive there in December, after having completed various missions.

It was very curious to see how Base 211 responded to the messages. To the Americans, that base seemed incredible, and they found it hard to believe that anyone was actually there. In the last message, the base requested some very specific medicines and *medical* supplies, which they hoped the submarine would bring in December. Patrick took advantage of the situation to ask the base how many people were currently living at the facility. The base did not answer that question.

That day, as the submarine made its way smoothly back to base, Reith and Patrick had met in the officers' mess over a couple of steaming cups of coffee. The rest of the crew were at their stations and the day had gone without a hitch. Reith felt good and believed he had made the right decision in agreeing to take part in the mission.

"Captain Malone, you are a man of your word. I wish to thank you, on behalf of my family and myself, for having fulfilled your commitment to bring them to the United States and ensure they are well settled. I speak also on behalf of Bóse."

"It was my part of the bargain, Reith. I appreciate your words, and now it is up to you and Bóse to see our mission through to the end," Patrick took a long sip of his coffee, "I can understand that it is difficult to attack the German base with us, but the United States will be generous with you. Within Operation Highjump, our work is fundamental."

"Don't worry, Captain. We're men of our word too; our decision is clear and we'll see it through to the end. Our former comrades are no longer our comrades in the military sense. Today we understand that Germany is beginning to change, and the Germany we served is no more—all that remains is that Antarctic base." Reith was convinced of what he was saying.

"I'm glad *to hear* that," Patrick smiled. "Personally, I'm grateful that you've agreed, and I believe our mission wouldn't be the same without the two of you. You are two indispensable pieces
indispensable.

Reith appreciated the trust Patrick was showing. Then the two men remained silent, lost in thought, watching the steam rising from their cups. Patrick continued:

—The other day I met with Vice-Admiral Clark to discuss various aspects of our mission. He told me about various projects that Germany had launched to assist in the construction of Base 211. Clark really surprised me when he mentioned a secret air unit, KG 200, which played a prominent role in highly confidential missions during the war and whose aircraft helped transport personnel and supplies to Antarctica. (Is that true? What can you tell me about all that, Reith?

Reith smiled.

'KG 200 was a secret squadron for secret missions. I know it began before the war and was first called Gruppe Rowehl, in honour of the man who set it up and led it for almost the entire war. Then, from 1944 onwards, it was renamed KG 200, until the end.'

"And what missions did it carry out, Reith?" Patrick was curious about this secret, ghostly squadron.

'I'm not entirely sure, Captain. It was a secret unit to us as well. "In any case, I can tell you two *things!* One is that they used all sorts of aircraft, including captured enemy planes. For example, the B-17s or B-24s, Mosquitos, Curtiss, and so on. And the second point is that they carried out missions to drop saboteurs into enemy territory or to deploy espionage teams."

—And Antarctica. How did KG 200 collaborate with Base 211? —Patrick finished his coffee.

—Our submarines and surface vessels picked up those passengers and the cargo carried by those aircraft from the latter half of 1944 until the end of the war. I had taken part in several of those pick-up missions carried out in Namibia or on the island of Zanzibar and the subsequent journey to Base 211.

"What's Base 211 like? Is it very difficult to get in?" Patrick saw this as a good moment to have a relaxed chat with Reith.

—Base 211 is an entire underground city. As far as I know, the population—comprising civilians, scientists and military personnel—numbers several tens of thousands. The temperature inside is very pleasant, as they have managed to harness the natural geothermal activity

to heat the entire residential and building area. They live and work in purpose-built facilities, where they obtain the materials needed to carry out their work. When the material is heavy or involves large-scale metallurgy, it comes from Chile or Argentina, manufactured by companies in those countries but managed by Germans, on civilian ships flying flags of convenience and under total Eastern control, protected throughout their journey to the base. Base
211 has several other outposts, which control a vast area of Antarctica, but always within the boundaries of what is known as Neuschwabenland, as demarcated in 1958. For example, off the Weddell Sea, where there are two air and maritime control bases.

'But isn't life very hard underground?' Patrick couldn't understand *how* anyone could live like that.

—First of all, the residents of Base 211 are committed and believe in what they are doing. They are all volunteers, both men *and* women. Some have been there for almost three years now. But it's true that it's not an easy life, despite certain existing comforts. For that reason, roughly every three months and in shifts, groups of people spend a period of time in Chile or Argentina, before returning to continue their work.

—It seems those countries have provided and continue to provide invaluable assistance. And what about families, children, and so on? How does all that work? —Patrick found it hard to believe.

—There have been many births, as the government of the Fourth Reich gives top priority to families and children. I can't tell you anything more on this point as I'm not aware of it
——Reith shrugged, and Patrick was taken aback by the term 'Fourth Reich'.

"Don't worry. And what about the base's defences?" continued Patrick.

—The base garrison carries out surveillance and
defence missions and may number around 4,000 or 5,000 SS men, although I believe there are many more. I can tell you that within about 300 nautical miles, any approaching aircraft or vessel is detected. We have records of our own aircraft, submarines and surface vessels in operation. Therefore, if enemy vessels are detected, a defence protocol is initiated which begins

with the deployment of circular craft that bear no resemblance to the aeroplanes we are all familiar with. They do not even require runways for take-off or landing, as they operate vertically from tunnels built for this purpose. These craft can engage in combat or conduct surveillance on a targeted vessel. We have had false alarms involving Norwegian, Chilean or Argentine whaling fleets, and so the supposed enemy must first be identified. If it is an enemy, it suffers the devastating attack of the circular craft —Patria recalled the photos of the circular craft she had seen at the meeting in Norfolk with the high command of Operation Highjump—. The base has had to intervene against some British ships, some allied spy planes, spy fishing vessels, etc. These have been swift interventions that appeared accidental or left the enemy unable to explain the situation. In all cases, there were no enemy survivors. But the Base
211 avoids direct confrontation so as not to reveal its existence. As far as I know, there is still a lot of work to be done on an I'M Reich.

Patrick smiled at that description.

"It's no joke, Captain Malone; that is the objective." Reith continued:

"The static defence includes batteries of highly advanced conventional artillery, sonic and vortex cannons, and all manner of rockets and missiles far more modern than those used in the final phase of the war."

Patrick had heard something about those fantastic, legendary weapons and was even aware that his army had captured one of those Vortex vortex cannons or 'Turbulenzgewehr', designed by the Austrian Dr Zippermayer, and captured by members of the
C.A.F.T. (Intelligence Technical Branch) of the US 12th Army Group, at the Hillersleben test site on 28 April 1945, some 120 kilometres west of Berlin. It had been built at the Hermann Göring Stahl Werke factory in Heerte, in the Black Forest. It was a strangely shaped cannon, which was half-buried and resembled a huge L, with the end cut off vertically, which fired 'packets' of air at extremely high pressure over great distances, both in the air and on the ground, capable of destroying any object. Its cons-

The weapon was developed to counter the waves of Allied bombers over Germany. The gun was equipped with a combustion chamber that generated explosions directed at the target. Huge flames, up to 4 metres long, shot out from the muzzle of this weapon, which was usually mounted on a railway platform, meaning it could be used to defend mountainous terrain or hills from the mouth of a tunnel, protected from air attacks.

Years before all this, and as the origin of this weapon, Dr Zippermeyer had conducted scientific studies into aircraft accidents caused by atmospheric turbulence and other meteorological phenomena. As a result of this research, and given Germany's rearmament programme at the time, he sought to find a practical application for the artificial vortex as an anti-aircraft weapon. The initial tests did not yield the expected success, and much of the hope was dashed. In these tests, a cylinder propelled finely pulverised coal into the sky at high speed, and an anti-aircraft projectile then attempted to ignite it instantly; however, the tests indicated that it did not work. A major problem was the synchronisation of the detonator with the ideal moment for the coal to expand in the air. Nor did the coal burn *with* sufficient intensity to produce the artificial whirlwind. The quantity of coal required would have been so great that it was impossible to put the theory into practice. Attempts were made with other flammable materials, but none could be found at that time.

The project seemed doomed to failure, when chance came to the Austrian scientist's aid. During the summer of 1944, a series of consecutive explosions completely destroyed a synthetic petrol refinery in Ludwigshafen. The cause was an
uncontrolled ethylene gas leak, although the Americans claimed it had been a new type of liquid-air bomb. Members of the T.A.L. (Technische Akademie der Luftwaffe), after investigating the accident, concluded that this would be the

> 'ideal component for Dr Zippermeyer's cannon. However
> It remained very difficult to use as an anti-aircraft weapon, as
> achieving the necessary accuracy was extremely difficult.
> However, as an air-to-air and ground-attack weapon, it proved
> practically perfect. A small bomb was designed and used



Excerpt from Dr Zippermeyer

34 kilograms of ethylene oxide which, upon detonation, released its deadly cloud into the air; an internal detonator then caused it to ignite, instantly producing a fireball that emitted a devastating shockwave reaching 210 tonnes per square metre and obliterating everything within its range.

As you can imagine, and given the situation on the front lines, the German Army High Command showed the utmost interest in the system. They christened it the 'liquid air bomb' and, according to statements recorded in BIOS (British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee) Report No. 142 from the interrogation of Dr Kurt Creutzfeld, a scientist on Dr Zippemeyer's team, the bomb contained 59% pulverised coal and 41% liquid air. Precisely this very brief description prevents us from knowing exactly what the precise components were. It is known that the weapon was prepared by specialists from the company Nobel GmbH and developed in Vienna, at least to that stage of development.

The increasingly dire situation as the war progressed forced Dr Zippermeyer and his team to relocate to the Horn gyroscope factory in the town of Plauen, in the Vogtland region of Saxony,

during September 1944. The scientist's fate is unknown, but the British have always believed that he fell into Soviet hands, although he may also have escaped. During the interrogation to which Dr. Creutzfeldt was subjected, he stated that in the first test of the fully developed bomb, it managed to completely destroy everything within a radius of 500 to 600 metres and caused very serious damage up to 2 kilometres away. In a subsequent test using a projectile with a heavier payload, the explosion covered and devastated an area of 4 kilometres, with damage extending over 12 kilometres. This last test was photographed and recorded using various tracking devices by SS Standartenführer Klumm, who forwarded all the material to SS General Kammler and to Himmler's personal aide-de-camp, Brandt. It is suspected that the weapon was used on several occasions against enemy ground targets, and in particular in the defence of a bridge over the River Elbe in Germany. But the secret surrounding this terrifying weapon remains to this day. Will the documents relating to Dr Zippermeyer and his cannon ever be declassified? Why are they still being kept secret?

Meanwhile, Dr Richard Wallauschek designed a sonic cannon known as the 'Luftkanone' or 'Stichhaltiger Kanone', which consisted of large, disc-shaped parabolic reflectors measuring some
/› metres in diameter, connected to a chamber comprising several tubes that fired a mixture of methane and oxygen into a combustion chamber. There, the two gases were burned in continuous, cyclical, pulsed explosions at a rate of between 800 and 1,500 per second. The length of the firing chamber was exactly a
‹quarter of the wavelength of the sound waves emitted by the resulting explosions. Each explosion triggered the next,
generating a high-intensity shock wave exceeding 1,000 millibars at 50 metres and, as a result, creating a source of
‹.sound of great amplitude.

The sound emitted, a single continuous note, was so loud and of such auditory pressure that anyone within a radius of 100 metres would die or be incapacitated within a radius of almost 500 metres. Laboratory tests demonstrated that the
concept and the machine worked, and it is known that a



Dr Richard Wallauschek's cannon by Dr Richard Wallauschek, captured by American troops

sonic cannon which was captured by the Americans at the end of the war.

Patrick was amazed.

"But what are you telling me, Reith? Operation High-Jump will come up against an insurmountable obstacle. It will be a disaster. Those weapons are far superior to our arsenal," he said, placing his hands on his forehead. "What you're saying is impossible."

"As you know, Captain, everything I've explained to you is in the report I drew up with Böse for you and Vice-Admiral Clark at the start of our collaboration. I can't explain it any more clearly, but it seems you're not particularly concerned."

'Yes, I'm aware of the report and I've discussed it with Clark. We've found it excessive, though we haven't dismissed it as a joke. But that's no longer the issue, Reith. Operation Highjum has gone so far in the public eye and involves such high-profile figures that it can't be stopped now. There would be no logical or acceptable excuse for the American people.' 'It's terrible,' said Patrick, leaning back against the seat of the officers' mess, gazing up at the metal ceiling criss-crossed with pipes. He looked back at Reith. 'That makes our mission of vital importance. We must neutralise those defences before the main body of the expedition reaches Antarctica. Otherwise, it will be a bloodbath.'

'That is the problem with having concealed from the American people the technical advances made by Germany in all fields.'
—Reith shook his head.— It would be a shock

if it became public knowledge just how far the technology had advanced and that his country currently lacked the defence capability to counter some of those war machines.

'That's true, Reith,' admitted Patrick. 'But I also understand that this is part of wartime propaganda. It's a basic principle: the enemy cannot possess anything positive; everything about them is hateful and a grave threat to our interests. In the eyes of the people, that justifies any attack using the most brutal weapons in our arsenals.'

'For example, the atomic bombs on Japan,' added Reith.

"Exactly. In fact, there has been no need to apologise for their use, despite the consequences of dropping them and the effects on the civilian population. All of that has been duly concealed in the media," Patrick spoke to Reith as if he were an American, though his voice betrayed a certain anxiety about what lay ahead, given the information he was handling.

The submarine entered the dock at the Norfolk base.

Chapter 12

KG 200 KAMPFGESCHWADER 200

The First World War demonstrated the need for aerial reconnaissance of enemy territory before and during battle.

But it also demonstrated that it was vital to know the enemy's territory and its facilities in order to have a more accurate idea of the type of enemy being faced and its real capabilities for attack or resistance. As early as 1938, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, Generaloberst Freiherr von Fritsch, stated that "the military organisation with the best photographic intelligence would win the next war".

The Treaty of Versailles allowed Germany to maintain a national security service, and therefore one with an exclusively domestic remit. At the same time, however, a structure for foreign espionage was being organised in secret. The Amt für Auslandsnachrichten und Abwehr (Office of Foreign Intelligence and Defence) reported to the High Command of the Armed Forces (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – OKW). This office was divided into sections (Abteilungen), with the following structure:

Abt I: responsible for espionage (later divided into Foreign Armies)

Abt II: responsible for subversion and sabotage

Abt III: responsible for counter-espionage

Whilst the Luftwaffe remained a force developed in secret and in breach of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the Abwehr recruited a First World War pilot, Flugkapitän Theodor Rowehl of the Hansa-Luftbild GMBH aerial reconnaissance company, to takephotographs of the border defences of Germany's neighbouring countries. For the photographs of the Polish border, he used a Junkers Ju 34 transport aircraft, in a special version known as the Ju Y 54, D-1119, which had set the world altitude record in May 1929 by reaching 12,799 metres.

In recognition of his work, Rowehl was appointed head of the Luftkreis VI Photographic Unit in late 1933, a role in which he was responsible for developing camera installations, photographic techniques and the design of aircraft capable of carrying out military aerial photography. The Luftwaffe's standard cameras for aerial photography were the automatic Reihenbildner models, though these had already been upgraded with Zeiss lenses and optics of 20, 50 or 75 *cm focal lengths.* As the Luftwaffe typically operated at medium altitudes, the most popular models were the RB 20/50 and the RB 50/30. By 1939, German military photography and interpretation technicians based at Zossen were far ahead of their British counterparts.

Prior to the formation of a specific squadron for special missions, in 1937 Göring and his RLM (Reichsluftministerium) made five long-range squadrons available to all branches of the army for reconnaissance duties. They were later grouped according to their tasks into two main groups: Fernaufklärungsgruppen Aufkl.Gr (F), for long-range missions for the High Command, and the second group, or Heeres-
/Luftaufklärungs-gruppen Aufkl.Gr (H), for short-range missions and reconnaissance for the Army. These groups saw their first real combat in the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939, assisting General Franco's troops. This structure was under the command of Oberstleutnant Rowehl.

Rowehl and his team saw action on all European fronts, supporting the work of ground and naval units. The success of the Luftwaffe's reconnaissance units

Luftwaffe was regarded as a major threat by the British Admiralty. By the start of the Second World War, the Germans had already managed to photograph and gain detailed knowledge of the airfields in Bulgaria, the Soviet Union's oil production facilities and areas of interest in Syria and Turkey. Now they turned their cameras towards Denmark and Norway, to prepare for the so-called 'Weserübung', the code name for the operation to invade both countries, to prevent the British and French from entering them. This was a fear of Hitler's, which proved to be true.

With a Focke-Wulf 200 Condor C1 aircraft under the command of the pilot... Cornelius Noell and his co-pilot, Siegfried Knemeyer, flew from Königsberg to Kristiansand in Norway. From there, Knemeyer flew the same aircraft to Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. This German manoeuvre enabled the Luftwaffe to establish airfields in Denmark and naval and land bases along the Norwegian coast. The invasions of Denmark and Norway, 'Weserübung Süd' and 'Weserübung Nord', began on 9 April 1940, with the rapid occupation of the two countries and the destruction of the British-French expeditionary forces sent to the area.

During the Battle of Britain, the group's operations focused on photographing military targets of interest and dropping agents into enemy territory for sabotage or espionage missions. They also carried out drops over countries that were neutral at the time. These types of operations, which required excellent night navigation, were entrusted to Gruppe Rowehl, which specialised in difficult and complicated flights in cloudy skies or where the weather was far from favourable. Under normal conditions, the drop was made within a radius of 8 kilometres of the target area, although there had been cases of very serious errors. For example, on the night of 5–6 May 1940, an aircraft under the command of Hauptmann Karl Edmund Gartenfeld, Staffelkapitän of the 3rd Squadron and responsible for many agent drops in Ireland, parachuted Lieutenant Dr Hermann Goertz on the outskirts of Dublin. Ireland was a neutral country and therefore had no government order to turn off the lights in its cities at that time. The drop took place more than 80 kilometres from the target area, in Dundalk, in County Armagh, in the north of Ireland. Se-

Apparently, Hauptmann Gartenfeld mistook the lights of that city for those of Dublin, as he took the harbour lights to be more or less correct.

Curiously, Dr Goertz had already been imprisoned by the British in 1936 for four years on charges of espionage, but had coincidentally established contact with members of the IRA whilst in Maidstone Prison. His mission in Ireland was to set up a network of saboteurs under German command, operating on the fringes of the IRA terrorist organisation. On this second mission, and after reaching Dublin in the south with great difficulty, he successfully made contact with the IRA's top leader, Stephen Hayes. Apart from
taking all his money, the IRA did little else for him and eventually handed him over to the authorities in November 1940. Dr Goert committed suicide in prison a few months before being repatriated to Germany, fearing he would be handed over to the British. Despite
Despite other attempts in the British Isles to establish a network of saboteurs and even to make contact with the IRA from Ireland, the German missions did not achieve the success they had hoped for.

At the start of the war with Russia, Operation Barbarossa, five squadrons of Gruppe Rowehl were transferred to the Eastern Front. The nd Squadron operated from Kraków, in Poland; the 2nd
from airfields in Romania and Bulgaria, and the from
:Hamina in Finland. The aircraft most commonly used by these squadrons was the Junkers Ju 86P. However, as early as 1934, Theodor Rowehl's squadrons had begun conducting aerial reconnaissance of the Soviet Union, on flights reaching altitudes of over 9,000 metres. They possessed photographic intelligence on the military port of Kronstadt and Leningrad, the industrial areas of Pskov and Minsk in western Russia, and the naval port of Nikolayev on the Black Sea. In particular, the photographs taken in Kronstadt over several weeks provided valuable information on the pace of shipbuilding by the Russians.

These flights had their difficulties, such as that experienced by a Junkers Ju 8ÜP, with the civilian registration D-APEW, on 15 April 1941, before the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and Russia. This aircraft was carrying out a photographic reconnaissance mission from Krakow to the Zhitomir area in Belarus when one of its engines failed. Near Rovno, in the Polish part

While over Russian-occupied territory, the aircraft was intercepted by a Soviet fighter, which opened fire on the German plane. The pilot of the Junkers, Petty Officer Schnetz, managed to land the damaged aircraft, and he and the flight observer, Petty Officer Walter, blew up the cockpit and all the equipment, including the cameras. They were subsequently arrested.

Following an initial interrogation in Rovno, they were handed over to the GPU for further questioning. Their story was that they had crossed the border during a training flight from the pilot school en route to Krakow. But it was clear to the interrogators that there were more crew members on board the aircraft, as the standard complement was four men. The two detainees stated that a Russian and a Ukrainian had parachuted out before the forced landing. Schnetz specified that one of them had taken the non-instrument flight course in Krakow. Following the start of Operation Barbarossa, Schnetz was informed that he was to be hanged or shot. He and Walter were taken to another prison, but during the confusion of the early days of the German attack and the Soviet retreat, they were abandoned by their captors and rescued by an advance company of the German infantry. They then returned to Warsaw, where they were received by Rowehl and reinstated to active service once more.

One of Gruppe Rowehl's most famous missions was its deployment to the Middle East. The German High Command's aim was to permanently cut off the British supply route to the entire region. Meanwhile, the British feared a German advance through the Balkans and Syria into the Middle East. Since the First World War, the British had maintained 'rights of way' for their troops from Iraq to Palestine and had established air bases at Shaibah, near Basra, and at Habbaniyah, near Baghdad. On 30 April 1941, the pro-German Prime Minister of Iraq, Rashid Ali, staged a coup d'état, requesting assistance from the Germans, who were unable to provide it immediately as they had begun the invasion of Greece on the 6th. Rashid's army laid siege to Habbaniyah on 29 April, and the Luftwaffe prepared a few aircraft from the Balkan campaign to assist Rashid. They were dispatched, bearing Iraqi colours and markings

Jeinkels He 111, Messerschmitt Bf 110 and Junkers Ju 90 transport aircraft, which flew from Athens to Rhodes. The total fleet comprised 24 aircraft that reached Mosul, in northern Iraq, and began bombing the British on 14 May.

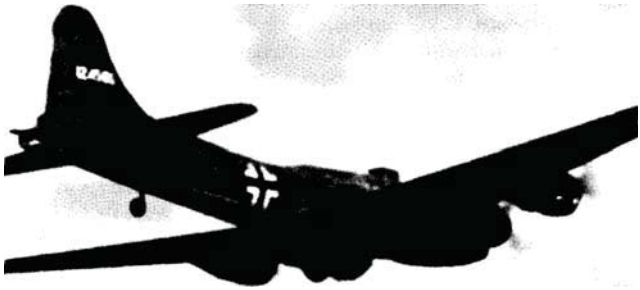
Gruppe Rowehl played a small but notable role amongst the Luftwaffe units in Iraq. Knemeyer, the pilot, who had taken part in the invasion of Denmark and Norway, flew with Officer Pfaff in a Heinkel He 111, carrying Oberst Von Blomberg and other officers to Mosul to carry out aerial reconnaissance of the oil wells in
](Irak and the Habbani area. During one of those flights, Captain Blombreg was shot from the ground and killed
‹before Kenmeyer could reach Baghdad airport.
The pro-German Raschid's troops launched an attack on Habbani on 21 May, but German support had already dried up, as it was focused on the capture of Crete and preparations for the invasion of the Soviet Union. The British managed to repel Raschid's attack and he fled Iraq.

Following other operations of varying nature in the subsequent years of the war, whilst always maintaining his excellent photographic work in enemy areas of interest, on 19 February 1944, with effect from 21 February, his activities were declared to have ended. These were transferred to a reorganised Versuchsstelle für Höhenflüge
—which was to be commanded by Oberst Heigl in Oranienburg. This new group, intended for special operations, utilised the equipment and personnel of Gruppe Rowehl. Rowehl was transferred to a *post* at the Air Ministry in Berlin. This group, KG 200, not only had German aircraft, mostly Heinkel He 111s, but also captured enemy aircraft that had been returned to service with German insignia. Among them were several B-17s and B-24s, as well as fighters and medium-sized aircraft.

Soon, the 1st KG 200 was transferred to Berlin-Finsterwalde. A A large part of its initial operations involved dropping agents and saboteurs into Allied-occupied Italy, North Africa and, following the Normandy landings, southern France, at a rate of one mission every two days during the summer of 1944. It even formed a contingent of paratroopers

coded 7/KG 200, which carried out operations on French soil, in Vassieux-en-Vercors, against elements of the Resistance that had emerged at the time of the liberation of France.

In October 1944, it was decided to reorganise the KCr 200. Oberst Heigl was given command of a parachute battalion in East Prussia. His post was taken over by Oberstleutnant Werner Baumbach, a successful bomber commander who enjoyed a good personal relationship with Hitler and Göring. Baumbach took Major Adolf von Harnier with him as his Chief of Operations. The missions continued, including over areas already occupied, to provide support to German troops or collaborators who had been overrun by the Red Army on the Eastern Front. On 27 November 1944, in a notorious mission, Hauptmann Heinz Braun flew a Junkers Ju 29C A-4 from the squadron based in Wiener-Neustadt, carrying five Iraqis and two tonnes of supplies for agents in the 2nd Mosul. There, an anti-British movement was led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammed Amin Al Hussein, with the support of the Palestinian Arabs. The flight was a success and lasted 12 hours and 51 minutes, covering a distance of 5,000 kilometres.



A captured American Boeing B-17 Superfortress painted with the German insignia of KG200



Werner Baumbach

Both Gruppe Rowehl and its successor, KG 200, had extensive experience of difficult missions carried out in the worst imaginable conditions—both in terms of weather and deep within enemy territory. These were almost suicidal missions, which their pilots accepted with discipline. But it is in the use of American aircraft—the B-17 'Flying Superfortress', the four-engined B-24 'Liberator' and the rare and highly advanced Junkers Ju 590 VI, Junkers Ju 290 AS and the Blohm und Vöss 222 seaplane that are associated with Base 211 and its supply operations in the final years of the war. KG 200 had made flights to Japan carrying various supplies for its ally and returned with materials of interest to Germany. In other words, long-distance flights were one of the unit's specialities of the unit.

The use of submarines and surface vessels became increasingly difficult and dangerous. Although the number of people and the amount of equipment transported to Antarctica was immense, it was also true that many vessels had been lost along the journey. Furthermore, these were long and gruelling voyages for all of us who were not sailors, and the ships themselves had to be very well equipped internally to carry so many passengers, crew and both civilian and military supplies. The use of KG 200 aircraft was a valid, fast and cheaper option than ships. Two main routes were used for the journey to Antarctica.

The first route ran from Germany to Spain, where the aircraft refuelled, and then on to a private airport near Lüderitz, Namibia, which belonged to the family of Dr Schnee, who had been the last governor of the German Protectorate in Africa until 1918. This family owned vast tracts of land in Namibia, including a private port south of Lüderitz. Travellers bound for Antarctica were picked up by submarines or surface vessels that took them on the final leg of the journey

to Base 211. Travellers could rest and, even though they formed large groups whilst awaiting embarkation, they could enjoy every comfort until they were picked up.

The second route ran from Germany to Turkey, where the planes refuelled and continued their journey to the island of Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean. There, on a German-owned estate near the port of Manakara in the south-east of the island, travellers arrived at an aerodrome to be picked up and taken to Antarctica. The airport was wholly owned by a shell company on the island, Zanzibar Shipping & Aircargo Ltd., which was run by Germans, although it was listed as being owned and managed by the island. Zanzibar had been one of the destinations selected by Himmler to resettle all the Jews of Europe. That option was later ruled out, as it would have involved a massive relocation effort.

From February 1944, KG 200's involvement in transport operations to Antarctica greatly accelerated the movement of all kinds of cargo and passengers. A total of 617 flights were carried out up to 7 May 1945, when the last one took place from northern Italy to Lüderitz. Throughout this incredible air operation, only two aircraft were lost. Officially, although it is very difficult to confirm as this unit carried out secret missions and, understandably, there is little historical record, KG 200's final mission in Europe was carried out by Hauptmann Heinz Braun and his crew, who flew a Junkers Ju 290 A-6 to Barcelona, Spain, in late April 1945.

The aircraft, fitted out as the Führer's private plane, had 50 seats and every conceivable amenity. It was stationed at Hörsching airfield, awaiting special flight orders from Luftflotte VI. It is said that this flight was intended to serve as an escape route for the leaders in Berlin, including Hitler and Eva Braun. Following the flight to the Iberian Peninsula, the aircraft remained in Spain; it was later acquired by the Spanish government and used as a transport aircraft. It was withdrawn from active service following an accident in the mid-1950s.

Chapter 13

MEETING WITH CLARK AND BLANKFORT

September was drawing to a close, and with it the numerous trials the submarine and its crew had undergone. Everything had gone well, and the vessel had demonstrated its technical quality and superior to face any enemy. Patrick remained deeply concerned by the written and oral information he had received from Reith regarding the capabilities and new weapons available to Base 211. Vice-Admiral Clark was also aware of this, but they could no longer halt the entire war machine that had been set in motion by Operation Highjump.

The entire crew was introduced to the commander who would be joining the crew with his men between South Africa and Antarctica. His name was Ralph Blankfort and he looked like a soldier with experience in special operations. He had served on the Pacific front against Japanese garrisons, in operations behind enemy lines and in sabotage missions in collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese troops. There was no doubt that fighting the Japanese in this way demonstrated courage and professional ability beyond question. A scar ran across his face, a reminder of one of his missions. Now it remained to be seen how he would fare in combat against a different enemy and in weather conditions entirely unlike those of the Pacific front.

The U-2193 rocked gently inside the bunker, for on that day, 21 September 1946, the sea was in full

storm. Blankfort arrived at the submarine accompanied by Vice-Admiral Clark and they quickly made their way to the officers' mess. Clark wanted the entire selected crew to be present, which Patrick thought was excellent. What was to be discussed there concerned them, and they needed to be aware of the scope of their mission. What those men could do could change the course of Operation Highjump.

Once the coffee had been served, Clark spoke without beating about the bush.

"Welcome, everyone. You all know me by now, and I felt it appropriate—as did Captain Malone—for all of you to be present at the meeting we had planned aboard the U-2193. I'd also like to introduce Captain Ralph Eilankfort, of the Royal Marines and a member of the SEALs."

Blankfort looked at those present as Clark introduced him. Sturdy and dark-skinned, his gaze betrayed a certain arrogance. Patrick noticed it immediately.

"He is a man experienced in combat," Clark continued, "and in high-risk missions behind enemy lines. He will lead the group of 50 SEAL commandos who will infiltrate Base 211 and carry out the destruction of vital elements of its operations. Close coordination with all of you is essential, as after entering the base via the submarine, the commando will disembark where necessary and commence the operation.

Clark took a sip of coffee and continued:

'The commando unit will be transported on a civilian vessel and will board the submarine at a point in the South Atlantic, yet to be determined, and will travel with you to Antarctica. They will be carrying all their combat equipment and will therefore need sufficient space on board from the moment they embark.' He looked at Patrick after making this remark.

"Don't worry, Vice-Admiral Clark. Captain Blankfort and his men are scheduled to be accommodated in the bow section of the submarine. There is sufficient space. I am unaware of the volume of equipment they will be carrying, but we can make use of the upper stern section, where the diver launch system is located."

Blankfort spoke up at this point.

"I appreciate your offer, and on behalf of myself and my team, we'll have no trouble settling in. In any case, I do

explain how I have organised my men and what our combat tactics might be.

Vice-Admiral Clark nodded slightly

what Captain Blankfort was about to say. The captain took a floor plan of the German base from a document tube. The scale was approximate, but it gave a clear idea of where they would be. In a small box at the top, the map indicated Berkner Island in the Weddell Sea, and opposite it was the entrance to the base with its coordinates. Patrick thought it must be a huge base, as the entrance area and the inner harbour with its facilities were specified quite clearly, but the information beyond that was unclear. Reith and Böse were unfamiliar with it and could not provide further details.

'From the information we have, thanks to the report compiled by Officers Reith and Böse, Base 211 has only one sea entrance. This complicates the operation and leaves us no room for manoeuvre. We'll have to force our way in!

Blankfort's resolve was evident.

"Once the submarine has passed through the entry controls and entered the harbour, we must proceed to the command centre for the entrance opening and closing system and the power station that supplies the entire Base 211," he said, pointing to the spot he was referring to. Reith and Böse listened intently as Blankfort continued his explanation. "My men will be divided into two identical assault groups, each consisting of 25 men. Group 1 is called Jericho and Group 2, Leviticus."

Patrick was surprised by these names and looked at Miele, who looked as though she didn't understand why.

—Each group has three frogmen who will submerge the moment the gates open. The distance from the armoured entrance gate to the port, according to my reports, is about 200 metres, which the divers will cover with the aid of 'torpedo'-type manual propulsion units, which they will attach to the submarines moored there. That is to say, a total of six very powerful bombs that can be manually activated from the shore. The two groups of divers have different objectives. Those in Group 1, Jericho, will place the bombs in the northern mooring area, and those in Group 2, Leviticus,

“The south,” he said, pointing to everything he was naming. “The bombs will serve as a diversion when necessary. Once their task is complete, those men will wait in the area until the assault begins. They will carry waterproof portable weapons. Meanwhile, the submarine will arrive at the port and Group 2, Levítico, will also use the stretch between the armoured gate and the port to disembark from the submarine and board some inflatable dinghies that will allow them to reach the pier near the target power station —he pointed to the area on the map—. Of course, we don’t know where U-2193 will dock, but Group 1, Jericho, will remain on board until it docks and, once there, must fight its way through to the port’s control room. My plan is to have three assault groups. Once Jericho begins, the other two will also attack from their positions.

Reith spoke up at that moment.

I know that area and I can assure you there will be fierce resistance. The base knows those are crucial areas and they will defend them—have no doubt about that. The German’s words were like a bucket of cold water poured over Blankfort’s plan. The garrison within that perimeter vastly outnumbers your unit.

‘Look, Reith,’ Blankfort’s tone was menacing, ‘when I need your opinion, I’ll ask for it. You’re supposed to have agreed to cooperate with us, but I don’t trust either of you. You’ll always be Nazis.’

A deep silence fell over the submarine’s officers’ mess following Blankfort’s words. The Germans looked at Pitrick.

Clark intervened.

“Calm down, Captain Blankfort. These men have agreed to help us and so far there is nothing to criticise in their work. Besides, the war is over.”

All right, Vice-Admiral Clark, but you know I do not
the presence of these two men. I cannot trust them.

Although he was more measured, Blankfort still held his view of the two Germans.

Böse, seemingly ignoring Blankfort’s words, spoke up.

‘In light of your briefing, Captain Blankfort, and given your knowledge of the attack zone, I propose that the Jericho team remaining on board pose as prisoners captured by the submarine following a sinking. That will help us...’

“That’s nonsense, Böse. I’m in charge of the assault plan and this is my assault team. We’ll follow my plan,” Blankfort snapped, deeply irritated and wanting nothing to do with the Germans.

“Look, Blankfort,” Patrick snapped, “I can’t stand the way you’re treating these two men any longer, because they’re part of my team just like the rest of us. The way you’ve been treating them is an insult to me as well. What Böse has just suggested, at the very least, needs to be heard because it’s certainly not nonsense and could save the lives of your men out there.”

“I see you’re protecting them. Perhaps you’ll be tried for treason if all this fails, Captain Malone,” Blankfort said defiantly, turning towards Patrick. At that moment, he was struck by a punch that sent him crashing into the metal wall of the officers’ mess.

“Damn you, you arrogant bastard!” growled Patrick. Blankfort tried to get up, but was held back by everyone present.

Vice-Admiral Clark could not believe his eyes.

‘Everyone: stand to attention! That’s an order!’ Clark’s powerful voice made everyone obey without a murmur. ‘What on earth is all this about?’ He was truly furious.“I’m not going to take any action right now as the operation is underway, but I am warning everyone—and you two in particular,” he said, pointing at Patrick and Blankfort, “I don’t want any trouble between you. I don’t want some stupidity like what we’ve seen here to ruin a plan on which the lives of thousands of soldiers depend.” You’re going to work in coordination at all times, and especially when the commando unit boards the submarine.

He approached Blankfort.

“Captain Blankfort, you have been chosen for your reputation and combat experience, but I remind you that Captain Malone’s crew, and Captain Malone himself, are the finest men in the United States submarine fleet you could possibly imagine. Those two Germans are part of his crew, and he has chosen them personally. I have no objection, and as far as I’m concerned, they are as American as you or I. Is that clear, Captain?

“Sir, it is very clear, sir,” Blankfort replied like an automaton.

He realised that the discussion ended there. Clark turned to Patrick.

“Captain Malone, you must have your ship and your men ready to carry out the mission. Captain Blankfort has full authority to prepare the assault mission as he sees fit, based on the information he has. Is that clear?”

“Sir, absolutely, sir,” Patrick’s reply was also automatic, though Clark knew it wouldn’t be long before he’d want to speak to him in private.

The meeting continued, though it was now merely a formality since B) Blankfort pressed ahead with his assault plan, whilst Patrick and his men simply listened, without contributing anything. Their thoughts, for the time being, remained in their own minds. It was all over shortly afterwards and, following the customary farewells, C Park and Blankfort left the submarine.

‘What an idiot,’ exclaimed John ‘Bullet’ once the two visitors had left.

“He’s very arrogant,” remarked Miele, always so measured.

“Yes, and that’s dangerous when you’re leading a group of men into battle. You think you’re infallible,” Patrick concluded.

“As it stands, Captain Malone, it will be a bloodbath despite the possible initial element of surprise,” Reith said honestly, with the approval of Böse and the rest of the crew.

“I know, Reith,” replied Patrick. “All I can do is speak privately with Vice-Admiral Clark and try to steer the idea back on track. If this doesn’t go well, we’ll have to be prepared to use the weapons on board within the base and try to protect the command. I don’t even want to imagine what this could turn into.”

The next day, Patrick asked to see the vice-admiral. Betty warned him that he wasn’t in the best of moods. She was always a great help with these sort of details. His relationship with Betty was going from strength to strength and they were both very happy, but right now it was more important to speak to Clark.

‘Sit down, Patrick,’ the Vice-Admiral invited him. He sat down too: ‘I know what you want to talk to me about, but first I have to tell you

that I didn't like your reaction in hitting Blankfort; I can assure you he would have killed you. He's used to it and knows how to do it.

"I don't doubt it, Vincent," Patrick confirmed this last point, "and I thank you for that, but I am indeed here because of the consequences that my crew and I believe may arise from the plan Blankfort has devised. He and his men stand no chance the way he intends to go about it. It is wiser and more logical in these circumstances to follow Bõse's proposal and bring Group 1, Jericho, into the command centre as if they were prisoners, and once there, take the station more easily and almost silently.

Clark wouldn't budge.

"Biise and all of you have your reasons for thinking that way. The truth is that, apart from those two Germans, no one else knows about Base
211 from the inside, and we're working from comments and rough sketches of what it's like. I said it yesterday, Patrick: Bankfort is a professional who has survived extreme situations against relentless enemies and has always come out on top. I have no doubts about his ability, or even his ability to improvise if things go wrong. And you have to understand that I can't undermine one of my men when he's doing his job. Today he's the best option we have, and I believe that with our help and knowledge, the mission has the best possible chance of success.

—I still have my doubts, Vincent —Patrick wasn't backing down either—. By the way, what has been the number of our own casualties on your missions? I think we're all interested in that.

Although Clark was taken aback by the question, he reacted quickly.

'That's confidential information, as these have always been secret missions governed by different protocols. I can't tell you, Patrick.'

"Right, I see the situation is clear to you. For our part, I do want to tell you that we'll help them and provide cover from the submarine at all times. We have enough firepower to try and support the commandos' operation on the ground."

"That's the spirit, Patrick!" Clark flashed a broad smile. "You know I appreciate you, and sometimes you do things outside the rules where I turn a blind eye. No comment…"

Patrick smiled too. He knew that old fox was telling the truth. He'd helped him on many occasions. More than he perhaps *deserved.*

"You know I wouldn't let you go without a professional team, and I know you'll pull it off."

—I've never questioned the professionalism of Blankfort and his team, but we felt their approach to the raid was inappropriate. We believe it will be a bloodbath. I don't want to try to persuade you. You have the final say, and it's very clear what that is. We'll all do our best to make it happen.

"Don't be so pessimistic and let the specialists do their job.

"Is there anything else?" Clark could also be decisive, and his mind was now on other matters.

"No, Vice-Admiral. Thank you for your time."

Patrick's irony made Clark smile again, and he accompanied him to the door.

"Try to enjoy these last few days before you leave," he winked at him, glancing at Betty.

Patrick was taken aback. Was it possible that he knew about his relationship with Betty? The vice-admiral's *reaction* left no room for doubt. He knew. But how? Betty hadn't spoken to anyone, and they'd always been very discreet; he trusted her. Their plan had been to tell him when Patrick returned from his mission and make it official then. That man was smarter than Patrick had imagined, even though he knew him quite well.

Clark returned to his desk after seeing Patrick off, picked up the phone and asked Betty for Captain Blankfort's file. She brought it to him straight away.

"Here you are, sir," she said helpfully, retreating quickly.

Patrick's question had struck a chord with Clark and left him with doubts. That official report would provide the answer. Following several pages detailing the captain's extensive training and the excellent qualifications and decorations he had earned, a further set of ochre-coloured pages summarised each and every mission carried out up to that point. They listed the date, location, objective, command, outcome, and casualties on both sides. The figure for friendly casualties spoke for itself. Although he managed to achieve the objective

assigned, the average casualty rate among his men across all his missions was 81%!

It was an untenable figure that proved Patri‹:k right, although, on the other hand, the missions carried out by Blankfort had been successful in every case. It was a matter of weighing up what they stood to gain against what they might lose in human lives. The calculation was simple; 41 of Blankfort's men would lose their lives in that underground base, but they could prevent a greater loss of the entire operational force represented by Operation Highjump. He closed the folder, shut his eyes, then stood up and walked over to the window in his office, from where a good part of the Norfolk base could be seen.

"Only God knows what will happen there," he muttered under his breath.

Chapter 14

U-21 ON COMBAT MISSION

E1 1 October 1946 dawned with mist and a very cold north wind. The sea appeared calm in that area, although the meteorological service reported storms approaching from the north which had caused some problems along the Canadian coast and in New England.

The submarine had all its supplies on board and appeared to be in good order. The crew were in high spirits and eager to carry out the mission and return as soon as possible. The clock struck five in the morning and it was time to set off. The high command had granted access to the families of Patrick's men. He had requested this of Vice-Admiral Clark, who had agreed. Betty was there too, and had arrived in the same car as Clark. Clark winked at Patrick, who was surprised by their joint arrival.

Patrick was on the quay by the gangway and smiled when he saw Betty walking towards him. They embraced. There was no longer any need to hide their relationship. They spoke to each other in hushed tones, as if keeping a great secret. Everyone else was also saying goodbye to their families and boarding the ship. Clark approached Patrick

"Captain Malone, I want you to come back. That's an order!"

They also embraced as they said goodbye. All his men knew that the two had been in-laws, so that

that embrace seemed strange. Then Clark climbed onto the submarine's deck, where everyone was lined up waiting to say goodbye to the vice-admiral. Clark bid them farewell one by one, with a few words for each of them. The vice-admiral left the deck and walked down the gangway. The sailors on shore released the mooring lines holding the submarine to the quay, and it slowly began to pull away from it.

The journey was beginning.

From the conning tower, Patrick watched *as* the submarine began to pull away from the quay and the small group on shore waved their hands in farewell. They too waved back. Patrick had a lump in his throat, but now that things were underway, he had to concentrate on his work. The relatives on the quay grew smaller and smaller in the distance as the submarine put on speed. Soon it majestically entered the base's wide harbour, and the
open sea appeared before them.

'We're still in the conning tower, Kenneth. Set course 3-1-7.'

Kenneth relayed the order to
Patrick's order.

Although it was a grey day, the sun was trying to break through the thick clouds. It would have been a beautiful sight under different circumstances, but not for those men. The coast was receding further and further, and Patrick had decided to head out into the open sea and get as far away from the American coast as possible, heading towards Spain, just *as* he had agreed at the meeting with Clark. About 20 miles from the coast, he decided to submerge the vessel and remain submerged for most of the journey whilst crossing the Atlantic Ocean. The diesel engines, ventilated via the snorkel, sounded excellent and were propelling the submarine at a speed of about 11 knots, slightly below its maximum speed of 18 knots. The excellent hydrodynamics were a great help in achieving such high speeds whilst submerged.

A wonderful aroma of pancakes and coffee filled the entire room next to the galley. Allan Perkins, the cook, had gone to great lengths to prepare the first breakfast on board. The table was already laid out with the syrup and butter to go with the pancakes.

'We'll have two sittings for all three meals on board,' Patrick said, pulling a piece of paper from his jacket. 'We've already discussed this at some

, but I'll repeat it so there's no doubt. The first shift consists of Bert Eklund, Peter Higgins, Georg Böse, Stan White, Roger Blaufen, Johnny Allen and John 'Bullet', and the second shift of Kenneth Miele, Wolfgang Reith, Tex Jenkins, Cliff Tubb, Drive Holms, George Connors, Eric Jones, Allan Perkins, Dr Hill and myself. We'll keep it this way for the whole voyage. I want to ensure there is always someone on duty in each area. Kenneth will tell you the planned work shifts for the voyage.

Everyone nodded in agreement at the explanations. There were few of us and it was convenient for everyone; the way the shifts were organised posed no problem.

Whilst the first group was having breakfast, Patrick looked through the periscope. Everything was fine, and the radar wasn't picking up anything of note either. During the morning, they spotted several merchant ships heading for the American coast.

'They're definitely heading for the port of New York,' explained Kenneth Miele, who, as always, was on top of everything.

Patrick smiled at Kenneth's comments, but he had deep respect for him and absolute confidence in him. He had often thought that if one day Kenneth were no longer on board, his job would be very difficult.

"Captain," John's voice sounded metallic over the intercom— please come to the radio room.

Patrick and Reith arrived a few moments later.

—What's going on, John?

—Reith needs to send the message via the ENIGMA machine to Base 211. It's 11.00 am and, just as you told me, I'm letting you know.

—Very well, John.

—I've also sent the message to Vice-Admiral Clark, informing him of our situation.

John had done a good job and Patrick had delegated the whole business of messaging the bases to him, with strict timetables. Reith took his seat in front of the machine and placed a sheet of paper in front of him with the message he wanted to send. The message indicated the submarine's position and a few unremarkable details. What mattered was to show that the submarine was still operational and would soon be back in Antarctica.

The days passed without incident and the vessel made good progress. They crossed paths with numerous ships of all kinds, none of which took any notice of the submarine as it continued its journey submerged. As had been the case on the voyage from Buenos Aires, the level of comfort on board was absolutely incredible. Moreover, they had now become fully accustomed to the operation of all the on-board equipment and navigation systems. Messages were being sent and received without any problems. In one of them, Reith requested permission from Base 211 to refuel in South Africa from one of the merchant ships selling fuel and supplies in international waters to anyone who paid in cash. They had calculated that they would be there by mid-November. The base, through its men in South Africa, would prepare everything necessary to carry out the refuelling on the high seas. Patrick found it incredible that messages were being answered from the German base in Antarctica. He could not imagine how those people lived there. But it was clear that they were replying and showing interest in the submarine and its imminent arrival at Base 211.

The Spanish coast was now within periscope range. Cape Finisterre lay ahead of them. Soon they would pass the port of Vigo in Galicia, which had provided logistical support to the German submariners during the Second World War and had been a hotbed of spies from all the warring sides, watching which ships entered and left that port, only to report back to their respective general staffs. It had been an open secret that Spain provided that support to Germany.

It was 24 October 1946, and Patrick was jotting down in the logbook the few incidents that were occurring on that monotonous voyage. He preferred it that way, as he had no interest in confronting anyone in the middle of the sea. It would have been very difficult for the United States government to explain the presence of that submarine, with an American crew and all its German ensigns, should they have been captured. In any case, Patrick did not forget that, as Vice-Admiral Clark had said, they were Germans in every respect! It was the most complicated mission Patrick had undertaken in his entire military career and, of course, it would leave its mark on him and every single one of his men for the rest of their lives.

Kenneth approached him with two steaming cups of coffee. He offered one to Patrick, who accepted it with a smile.

"Thanks, Kenneth.

'It's getting dark out there,' said Kenneth, taking his place on the bridge. 'Don't you think it might be good to go out and sail on the surface? The men need it, and we've hardly had any fresh air the whole trip.'

"You're right. Sorry, but my mind's on other things. Sounds like a good idea," he said, turning to Bert Eklunrl and Peter Higgins at the helm. "Take us up," he said, putting his cap on backwards. "Raise the periscope." Kenneth operated the hydraulic control and the periscope came into view in front of Patrick with a soft hum. He scanned the entire surface around the area where they planned to surface. "Ahead, no problem. Stay on course and bundle up!"

"We'll take the opportunity to check some conduits on the roof.

'Kenneth's always so forward-thinking,' thought Patrick after listening to his mate. Everyone was grateful to get out for a bit. A cigarette at that moment went down a treat. The only ones left inside the submarine were Peter Higgins at the helm, Tex Jenkins in the engine room and Eric Jones in the radio room. John 'Bullet' fetched some seawater using a small bucket tied to a rope. He splashed the water over his face.

"I needed a bit of sea water on my face!" The others

laughed at the quip.

"You're no sea dog, 'Bullet'. You just like your radio gadgets and hanging around in there," Johnny Allen said, laughing as he took the opportunity to tease 'Bullet'. The burst of laughter was epic. The water from the small bucket shot towards Allen, who stepped aside just in time, only for it to land squarely on Stan White's face. Completely taken aback, he immediately realised what had happened and went after 'Bullet', who stumbled and fell heavily onto the deck.

"Bloody bastard!" roared White, as he lunged at 'Bullet'.

"That's enough, lads," Patrick intervened, trying to pull them apart. "I'm sure they can hear you all the way in Portugal. They're going to spot us with all your shouting."

After a few seconds, they parted ways. There were no further problems, and the two of them, along with the deckhands, were laughing heartily. They stayed on deck for another hour. The three men who had been at their posts were relieved so that they too could enjoy the moment. The sound of the water lapping against the ship's hull as it moved forward was monotonous, so it was not difficult to fall into a deep sleep. The temperature was pleasant and the sea was calm.

The Portuguese coastline was practically straight from north to south, except off Lisbon, which formed a huge promontory. They were keeping a distance of about 14 miles from it, wary of the possibility of a radar station. Of course, Portugal did not possess such advanced technology at that time, so Patrick was not particularly concerned. The on-board radar indicated a clear path for night-time navigation on the surface. The men had already returned below deck; the watch crew took up their posts and the rest went to sleep. They had agreed to repeat the experience whenever possible. In fact, once they reached the African continent, the temperature would be much higher and they might well fancy spending more time on deck.

They passed Por to, Espinho and Avero, and then headed further out to sea to avoid the large expanse of water formed by the vast Tagus River delta. During the day they resumed submerged travel. Only the periscope allowed them to observe what they were leaving behind. Everyone was very calm as they had not encountered any emergencies up to that point, but the proximity of Gibraltar did not please Patrick, nor the Germans, who were well aware of the famous military base on the Rock.

Cape St Vincent, the south-westernmost point of Portugal, was left behind, with the immense Gulf of Cádiz to port. Patrick set a southerly course, towards the Canary Islands, well clear of the southern coast of Spain and, above all, of Gibraltar. John's voice sounded as metallic as ever over the intercom.

"Captain, I've spotted a group of ships about 30 miles away."

"What course are they on?" asked Patrick, sounding a little concerned.

"They're heading our way," replied 'Bullet'.

The men gritted their teeth. This could get ugly.

"How many are there, John?"

—Six, Captain. And one of them looks like an aircraft carrier with a group of escort ships. Destroyers.

"Have they spotted us?"

"I don't think so, Captain. They've no idea we're down here."

After a few moments, Patrick picked up the intercom:

"Allen, prepare the tubes!" Kenneth

approached Patrick.

—But what are you going to do, Captain?

"Don't take any risks, Kenneth. Our mission must go ahead, and if those ships spot us, we could be in trouble and will have to defend ourselves. We have to make it to Antarctica,"

—Bert Eklund then said—. Set a course of 1-9-5 and try to get us out of here. Quickly!

He went to the periscope.

—Raise the periscope.

Kenneth watched Patrick and knew he could trust him, although at that moment the situation was very different from a normal combat scenario.

Reith, at the chart table, was jotting down the data that Patrick Patrick was indicating and which were supplied by John 'Bullet'.

"Coordinates?"

—Three hundred and fifty, Captain

—Lower the periscope. Range 9,100. Angle of inclination, five starboard.

The data was quickly transferred to the chart Reith was working on.

"John, how long will it take them to get here? What's the distance to their course? Helmsman, depth eighty-five metres!"

Patrick wiped the sweat from his brow.

—Full hard to starboard, steer to sixty!

"What's the time, John?"

"They'll be very close to us, on the new course, in 17 minutes."

—Thanks, John." —Patrick turned to Kenneth.—I don't think they won't see us. It's too far away.

Kenneth seemed calmer.

"Excellent. I've no desire to sink what is surely a British ship."

The submarine reached a depth of one hundred metres without difficulty and continued on its course away from the naval formation.

"Two ships are coming straight at us, Captain!" roared John 'Bullet' over the intercom.

"It can't be!" exclaimed Patrick, looking at Reith.

Kenneth and Bdse, standing beside Patrick, looked anxious at the sudden news.

"Engines, turbines running! Full speed!" bellowed Patrick. "John, what's the bearing?"

"Three hundred and fifty-one."

Reith marked the new position on the chart.

"They're very fast, Captain. Their speed is 22 knots.
"They'll be upon us in nine minutes." The
tension was mounting by the second.

"Charge, Captain!" shouted John.

Everyone was left spellbound by this news. Time passed. Suddenly, the maddening noise of the charges went off at a steady pace, getting closer and closer. Everyone knew the party was only just beginning. With each charge, a *'cf 1c'* sounded first, as the initial shockwave struck the submarine. Then came the sound of the explosion, followed by a prolonged rumble of water rushing past the hull and deck. The interval between the initial crack and the explosion gave them a rough idea of the distance at which the charge had detonated. If both were heard close by, things were looking grim. If they were simultaneous, it would be a direct hit. Everyone on board knew this.

The U-2193 was a sturdy submarine and its hull was solidly built, but the shock of the explosions was shaking it as if it were made of tin.

"Bert, go down to 250 metres or they'll kill us!" shouted Patrick.

"I can't, Captain, the sonar shows we're skimming the seabed. We've got a margin of five metres. I don't know when we'll hit the bottom."

The news couldn't have been worse. They were only about ninety metres from the surface, and for the new warheads developed after the war, that wasn't a problem.

Patrick grabbed the intercom:

"Torpedo room! Prepare two LUT-type torpedoes."

We've got to put a stop to this shit! And may God forgive me...

The submarine continued to be tossed about and was unable to fire its torpedoes at that moment. With every explosion, everyone was thrown about, so they couldn't brace themselves against anything that was in firm contact with the hull. The whole submarine shook; the massive steel frames held firm, but the pipes, ventilation ducts and all manner of mechanisms were vibrating so violently that they threatened to come loose from the ceiling and bulkheads. The air conditioning and ventilation were not working at that moment to avoid noise, so the temperature quickly rose to around 35°C. It was hell.

Eric Jones from the Radio Room felt sick and vomited into a bowl, which slid away and fell to the floor. Someone threw a cloth at it, but it didn't reach and remained in the middle of the corridor. The stem of a valve shot out, bounced twice off the metal floor and echoed spectacularly in the silence between two explosions. It then ended up in the hole where the periscope was hidden, clattering against the steel walls of the compartment until, with a muffled splash, it fell into the bilge water. Peter Higgins, in a feat of juggling, managed to retrieve the part. Then an unreal silence fell.

It seemed that the first blast had passed and they had gained some depth, down to 110 metres.

"Salas, damage control," Patrick requested.

One by one, the replies came back that there was no damage. The submarine had weathered the initial onslaught well. Patrick looked up.

'If they keep up the chase, we won't be able to let them get away. We've got the torpedo tubes ready, and I'm not going to let them sink us just like that.'

"They're still on our tail, Captain," said 'Bullet', glued to his headphones. The silence on board, as they continued at 18 knots, was absolute.

"We're leaving them behind, Captain," 'Bullet' reported to the bald man after what felt like an eternity.

Patrick knew exactly what to do.

"Bert, as we head south, go up and position to periscope depth.

When the vessel reached that depth, the order was obvious.

"Raise the periscope!" Patrick swept the area and soon spotted the two ships, which were still searching.

It was already getting dark, and that helped.

—Bearing?

'Forty-five, Captain,' replied 'Bullet' without hesitation. Heeling angle, five to starboard.

"We're on track, we're on track," repeated Patrick, staring through the periscope as if hypnotised. "Wait a moment. They're changing course and heading straight for us! Full speed ahead."

Stan White's voice rang out clearly:

"We can gain another knot, but the engines are at full throttle, Captain."

"All right, Stan, keep that top speed," Patrick continued to look through the periscope.

"Loading, Captain!" roared 'Bullet'.

The explosions could still be heard in the distance, but they were getting closer. Suddenly, the explosions stopped.

'The destroyers' propellers are slowing down, Captain. Bearing 0-7-0,' reported 'Bullet'. '0-6-5, Captain. The propellers are revving up! Heading 90 degrees port, range 2,000.'

Patrick couldn't hesitate at that moment.

'Full right, full left, Bert! Steer on 165, slow ahead. John, call out the bearings constantly!

'0-1-0, 0-2-0, range 1,100, Captain' — 'Bullet' was doing his job under the utmost pressure.

Patrick's voice rang out clearly in the Torpedo Room:

"Attention, bow! I've got a clear view… Bearing… seven and a half. Range, one thousand. List, five to port. Here they come again! Bearing… seven. Gyro angle, one to starboard. Stand by… six… five and a half… fire tube one!"

The first LUT torpedo shot out with maximum force towards its target.

"Torpedo fired electrically, Captain," reported the
—only bow. Next tube ready, sir.

Patrick wiped his face with his shirt sleeve. Sweat was pouring off him. Kenneth turned towards him, having spoken to Reith.

"The torpedo is on a bearing of zero, Captain. It's on the same bearing as the target and will reach it in 67 seconds."

"Right…" Patrick replied, almost in a whisper.

Everyone heard the explosion clearly, and Patrick saw the stricken ship begin to list. It was the end. The German LUT torpedoes did not need to be aimed at the target ship, as they were guided by highly sophisticated sonar.

The next destroyer stopped to help the sailors jumping overboard, trying to save as many of them as possible. U-2195 took advantage of the situation to disappear from the area without leaving a trace.

"They were probably British, and now there'll be an international incident."

"Against whom, Kenneth? (Who was it? The Russians?" replied Patrick, who had sat down in his chair and looked deeply distressed by what had happened. "I'm not proud of what we've just done, but our mission takes precedence over a destroyer," he seemed to recover momentarily.

"You've done your duty. If it's any consolation, I would have done the same," Kenneth tried to cheer Patrick up. "The rest of the crew feels the same way. Don't worry about it any more. The mission continues, and that's what matters."

After reporting the battle to Base 211 via the ENIGMA machine and informing Vice-Admiral Clark of the sinking of an Allied ship, the darkest of nights swallowed up the submarine as it made its escape southwards.

The coast of Morocco lay to the submarine's port side. Once again they were sailing on the surface, relying on the cover provided by the night.

'We're about 200 miles from the Canary Islands, Captain,' Reith said, holding steady the map sheet on which he had marked the submarine's position and the Canary Islands. The wind

was light in the conning tower, though pleasant. The temperature was about 2°C.

"Thanks, Reith," Patrick finished his cigarette. "I don't know what to make of the sinking of the British ship the other night... Vice-Admiral Clark has confirmed that it was a British fleet returning to Gibraltar and that we sank the destroyer HMS Brighton. Half the crew managed to be rescued."

Btise and Kenneth were also listening to Patrick's words.

'I can only conclude that you have done your duty, Captain Malone. Given our circumstances and the mission we must carry out, we had no choice but to sink that ship. Look at it the other way round, Captain: if they had sunk or captured us, the whole of Operation Highjump would have been jeopardised. You know that there are times when the interests of the state take precedence over human lives.'

Patrick looked coldly at Reith.

'It's incredible how callous you people are. I simply cannot understand it. I can assure you that I will remember this night for the rest of my life—the sailors being thrown overboard, whilst the burning destroyer listed hopelessly and sank inexorably.'

'That's what I think, and you're the one who asked me,' Reith replied quite logically. 'I would never have mentioned what happened. Not to you, nor to anyone else. I hadn't even mentioned it to Biise, and he hasn't said a word to anyone either. We're still soldiers, and we don't question orders. We simply obey.'

'That's clear, Reith,' Patrick cut in. 'Sometimes I forget that perhaps you are more professional and certainly colder than us, but you must understand that it shocks me.'

Kenneth stepped in, defusing the conversation.

Those lights are from the city of Essaouira. We're not far from being able to stretch our legs on land.

"Which towns do we have to pass through, Kenneth?" asked Patrick.

Pointing to Reith's map, he indicated them one by one: 'We'll be passing Agadir, Tiznit, Tan-Tan and Tarfaya.

From there we'll head west, towards the Sahara

Spanish, and specifically the city of El Aaiún, which is also a Spanish military base for General Franco's African colonial troops, and is therefore pro-German. The target island is El Hierro, which is the most south-eastern island in the archipelago. Here.

He pointed to the small island on the map. The navigation plan included a technical stop and a warning to the pro-German spies and informers still operating in Spain on the island of El Hierro, specifically in the port of La Estaca. There they would stock up on fresh provisions and make themselves sufficiently visible.

The ship set a westerly course after passing between the coast of Morocco and the Spanish islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. The radar picked up a Spanish Army Junkers Ju 52 flying from El Aaiun to Fuerteventura. There were no further incidents of note, apart from the presence of small Moroccan fishing boats at a distance, which posed no threat. They passed along the southern coast of the island of Gran Canaria, and their next stop was El Hierro, specifically the port of La Estaca.

Dawn was breaking when they spotted the small, quiet harbour of La Estaca. It was a fishing harbour, with a few houses and little else. Several women were mending nets by the quay. A small garrison appeared to be stationed atop a small promontory overlooking the entire harbour.

'I think there are soldiers there. What do you think, Kenneth?' Patrick stepped away from the periscope and Kenneth looked through it. 'I'm sure it's just a small detachment to deal with smugglers. They're not expecting a visit like ours. We've got the element of surprise on our side. I'm not worried about them, and besides, they'll be the ones to announce our presence here.'

"OK, sounds good to me, Kenneth." *He picked up* the intercom. "Torpedo Room, I need Dave Holms and George Connors on the bridge."

Shortly afterwards, both men appeared on the bridge.

"While we're in port, you'll be in charge of the two gun turrets and will provide cover for us should any emergency arise."

Very well, Captain.

The two men made their way to their combat stations and readied the powerful twin 50 mm guns. The submarine surfaced a short distance from the harbour, much to the surprise of the few people there. It moved closer, until it was about 150 metres from the quay. They did not know the depth of the harbour and did not want to run aground.

Wearing their German uniforms and carrying their service weapons, Kenneth V iele, Roger Blaufen, Wolfgang Reith, Georg Böse and Patrick climbed into the dinghy, which was already moored alongside the submarine, and rowed purposefully towards a stone staircase leading down into the sea. They climbed up it and headed towards the first house on their right. It looked like a small grocery shop. Several people had gathered by the jetty, watching everything that was happening with surprised expressions. Georg Böse had a fair knowledge of Spanish and approached a woman who had just come out of the shop.

"Good morning. We need food and other supplies for our crew. Can you help us?"

The woman was taken aback by the visit from these military men, but she replied in the affirmative. Kenneth and Patrick had stayed outside, keeping the submarine in sight. The locals watched them with curiosity, but without hostility.

The sound of a vehicle caught everyone's attention. A small military truck was lurching down a narrow dirt track, heading towards the port. It reached the tent and came to a halt. A flustered young corporal and three soldiers got out and made their way over to the supposed Germans. The corporal approached Patrick with great curiosity.

'Who are you and what are you doing here? The war ended a long time ago.'

Patrick put on a look of complete bewilderment, and Böse appeared at that moment.

—Don't worry, Corporal. We just want to pick up some supplies for the crew and be on our way.

'But you're Germans, and Germany surrendered in 1945,'
—insisted the young corporal. Where are you heading?

Böse, looking calm, continued:

—I cannot tell you, Corporal. You will understand that our mission is military. I repeat, we only want some supplies and to continue our journey.

You are in Spanish territory, flying a foreign combat flag, and that *warrants* an official explanation.

—And from whom do you expect to receive it, Corporal? From the government of 'Hitler'

Hitler's government?

Böse was beginning to grow impatient with that meddlesome corporal. Just then, the woman came out, helped by two men carrying about ten boxes, which they set down by the quay.

'Here you are, officer. That's 126 pesetas in total.'

'May I?' said Böse, pushing the Spanish corporal aside. He took out a wad of banknotes in various currencies, including Spanish currency, with which he made the payment. 'Thank you very much, madam.'

The corporal drew his service weapon.

"You must come with me now," he ordered, very nervously.

The soldiers under his command were perplexed by the turn of events, which was a far cry from their peaceful life there. Patrick and the others released the safety catches on their MP40s. The tension was palpable at that moment, and any mistake would lead to a bloodbath.

"Don't be silly, Corporal," Böse said, turning to the nervous corporal. "It's just a simple purchase. We've done a *bit* of business in the village and now we want to carry on with our journey."

In a split second, Böse disarmed the flustered corporal. His men were also quickly disarmed, though they offered no resistance.

"Now I'm going to tie you up, and once we've left, you can untie yourselves and get on with your guard duty. We don't mean you any harm," Böse asked for a rope from the shop, which was quickly handed to him. "How much is it, madam?

"Fifteen cents, officer," Böse proceeded to pay and then, together with his companions, tied up the Spanish soldiers.

After two trips with the inflatable raft, the provisions and supplies were transferred on board and everyone returned to their stations on the submarine. The village of La Estaca faded from view.

'I have no doubt that word of our presence here will get out,' said Kenneth, looking through his binoculars.

Patrick looked pensive:

"I'm sure word will get out. In that respect, we've fulfilled our mission. What worries me is that the sinking of the British destroyer might be linked to and blamed on a German submarine, and that would raise far too many questions on a global scale."

At that moment, Reith and Böse joined the group outside the submarine's conning tower.

You've done an excellent job, Böse. On behalf of everyone, I'd like to thank you for your professionalism and sense of duty.

Böse smiled, looking at everyone present.

'It was clear to me that I didn't want an armed confrontation with those poor lads. Any one of us would have done the same. By the way, Captain, we have a sensational salad today that Perkins has prepared for us with the fresh provisions we brought on board.

That's wonderful news. Very well, let's not keep him waiting, gentlemen.

Patrick climbed down the hatch at the head of the group, ordering the first shift that they could now go and eat. Then, turning to Kenneth, he ordered the submarine to submerge and continue the journey along the African coast.

The southward course continued without incident, and reports to Vice-Admiral Clark were sent and received regularly. Clark seemed pleased with the news and the progress of the voyage so far. Messages were also being sent to Base 211, updating them on the latest developments. Everything was going smoothly and nothing out of the ordinary appeared to be amiss. The submarine passed off the coasts of Nfauritania, Senegal, the Portuguese possessions of Cape Verde, Spanish Guinea and Sierra Leone. At that point, the planned route veered far from the coast and continued between the African coast and the British-flagged islands of Ascension and St Helena. They crossed the equator at that point and celebrated with a small party on board, as was the maritime tradition on any ship. Vice-Admiral Clark sent them a report in which he not only informed them that their presence in the Canary Islands had been detected, but also that the British had linked the sinking of the HMS Brighton to U-2195. And just as Patrick had feared, Britain had begun the search for the submarine. They had to

to avoid any British territory in their path. That could have complicated the journey.

They kept a distance of over 500 miles from the two British islands and were practically off the coast of Namibia. It was a relatively friendly area, as there was a large German population there. In any case, they avoided any contact with the coast and continued on course for South Africa. John 'Bullet' sent a message via the ENIGMA machine to Base 211, to inform them of their arrival in the area and to ask them to prepare everything necessary to meet up with one of the merchant ships that would supply them with fuel and other provisions. There was no problem, but the base added a request that they take on board three German engineers who had been on leave in South Africa and bring them to Antarctica. They would be on the supply ship. The request came as a surprise, but Patrick could not refuse it and sent a message confirming the request.

They kept crossing paths with numerous fishing boats leaving the various ports in the area. Avoiding the nets was, on many occasions, a real problem. The heavy maritime traffic in the area suggested that a major port was not far away. And so it was. Cape Town appeared clearly in the periscope and U-2193 took a wide detour at sea, avoiding the city and its maritime zone of influence. They passed the Cape of Good Hope heading east. The next stop was Port Elizabeth, where they would remain submerged in international waters and meet up with the ship. The outside temperature was already colder. It was clear that the latitude was different. The ENIGMA machine transmitted a coded message from Base 211. The ship they were to meet was the Luanda Dream, flying the Angolan flag, and they were given the date, time and exact position where the two vessels were to meet. The date would be 18 November, at 5 a.m., and the position would be 38° 60' South and 25° 40' East. The code name for U-2193 would be 'Shark'.

On the afternoon of the 17th, U-2193 reached the designated point and took up position at periscope depth.

—We'll let them come up and, once on board, we'll detain and interrogate them. They may have valuable information for our mission. The plan remains unchanged —Patrick was already thinking about the

three German engineers who would be joining them at that point, and what do with them.

Patrick was woken by Kenneth, who was on periscope watch on the bridge.

"Patrick, the radar's picking up a ship approaching our position. It's still about 20 miles away. I think it's them."

Patrick sat up.

"Right. I'll be with you in a moment," he said, half asleep.

Kenneth returned to the bridge and tried to spot the ship visually. It was still far off. Patrick arrived on the bridge with a cup of coffee in his hand. Kenneth gave up his place at the periscope.

"Can't see it yet, Patrick."

He looked and confirmed his second-in-command's words. He then picked up the intercom and ordered Eric Jones to scan the radio to see if anyone was trying to contact them. But the ship had to make the first contact. They couldn't reveal their presence, as a security measure.

After looking through the periscope again, he passed it to Kenneth and headed for the radio room. There, Jones was scanning the various frequencies. Although he was wearing headphones, a loud crackling sound could be heard every time he turned the dial. Patrick put on another pair of headphones. All sorts of voices and sounds could be heard. The radar showed a blip heading towards them. John 'Bullet' arrived at that moment.

"Any news, Captain?"

"Looks like our friend's on his way," said Patrick, pointing at the radar screen. 'Bullet' took his seat next to Eric Jones and began fiddling with another of the HALLICRAFTE RS radios, which was scanning through different frequencies.

Suddenly, a man's voice rang out in the headphones. He was a message:

—This is Luanda Dream. This is Luanda Dream. We are approaching the agreed point. I repeat, we are approaching the agreed point. Please reply.

It was clear they did not want to reveal their position over the airwaves so as not to alert anyone nearby who might be unaware of the operation. On the same radio frequency, 'Bullet' took the microphone.

—This is Shark. I repeat: this is Shark. Do you copy me, Luanda Dream?

I've got you loud and clear, Shark. We're almost at the point.

Kenneth's voice came over the intercom:

"Patrick, I've got visual contact with the ship."

Patrick arrived at the door of the Radio Room.

'Keep track of it. I'm going to the bridge and we're going to surface.' He went to the bridge and, through the periscope, could see the ship clearly.

Although it was still night, it was clear that it was an old merchant ship, badly battered and unpainted. But that didn't matter at that moment; one could expect nothing else from a mercenary vessel. It had what they needed, and the sea was as flat as a pancake.

The U-2193 surfaced in front of the ship, which was already beginning to slow down. They came up to the conning tower in their German uniforms. As usual, all those who spoke German were in the front row. The charade had to continue. Slowly, the Luanda Dream lowered a huge hose to transfer the fuel. All the submarine's engineers, in German uniforms, were on deck preparing to connect the hose to the fuel tanks. Meanwhile, ropes were also lowered to form a sort of aerial bridge capable of transferring the supplies and provisions requested to the submarine. Finally, using a rubber dinghy, the three engineers climbed aboard. From the bridge of *the boat*, the man who appeared to be the captain and a few of his officers waved to Patrick and his comrades in the conning tower. The captain of the Luanda Dream was wearing a T-shirt and shorts, and he came out to visually supervise the operation his men were carrying out. The only item of clothing that gave away his position was a white flat-brimmed cap, worn and very dirty. The two vessels were now very close, and the transfer of fuel and the delivery of the crates began.

The three engineers were standing on the ship's deck watching the operation unfold. They would be the last to board, once the entire transfer had been completed. The ship was pumping the fuel efficiently and it wouldn't be long before the tanks were full. All the cargo had also been transferred to the submarine.

'Bullet's' voice came over the intercom:

—Captain, I've detected three ships heading towards our position. They're about 15 miles away. They're travelling at over 20 knots. I don't like this.

"I'm on my way. Kenneth, come with me."

The two of them quickly descended from the conning tower into the hull. The radar screen left no room for doubt.

"Let's get out of here right now. This is a trap!"

"Planes, Captain. I've spotted planes heading this way!" Jones's voice was choked.

Without wasting a second, Patrick gave the order:

"Dive now! Everyone inside, quick!"

The dive siren blared loudly.

The engineers, led by Stan White, released the hose nozzle and a huge jet of fuel shot out towards the sea. They closed the watertight plugs on the tanks and climbed through the deck hatch. The mooring lines were cut with a shears from the conning tower and everyone hurriedly boarded the submarine. Two British anti-submarine seaplanes skimmed the water's surface with a deafening roar. They did not fire because the mother ship was alongside the submarine.

"Dive! Full speed ahead!" Within seconds the submarine had vanished from the surface, but Patrick knew they were not safe yet.

The aircraft dropped acoustic detectors into the water, which signalled the submarine's position. It was a devilish weapon.

"40 metres... 45 metres... 50 metres..." Bert announced Bert at the helm.

"We're going to give that bastard what he deserves..." Patrick seethed with fury at the pirate ship's betrayal, for he had already taken his revenge on the Germans and would now take it out on the British for their betrayal.

"Bow, LUT torpedo ready on my command."

—Tube two ready, Captain.

Patrick calculated the estimated distance with Reith using the cargo ship and suddenly gave the order:

"Fire!"

He started the stopwatch to calculate the time of impact. The torpedo began its deadly course towards the merchant ship. Soon a terrible explosion rang out, which could be heard from the bottom. The depth was already of 1 20 metres and they continued

sinking. It was their only chance. Several charges went off, exploded well above them.

They continued to gain depth and distance. They were now at 210 metres and seven miles from the position of the recently sunk merchant ship. The danger seemed to have passed, but the British knew exactly who the enemy was and would not give up the chase.

'It's possible they're monitoring the route to Antarctica. I suppose they're also aware of the German presence there,' Patrick said, looking at the nautical chart of the South Atlantic and tracing a line from South Africa to the South Pole.

Reith handled the compass with great ease.

"It's a vast area, Captain, and there's only one submarine. It's very difficult for them to locate us."

What Reith said made perfect sense, but they couldn't afford to be distracted.

'We'll remain submerged all the way to Antarctica. We have other option," said Patrick.

"Well, I don't mind. The temperature outside is already starting to 'That's a bit rude,' Kenneth laughed.

The others acknowledged the joke with a few laughs.

On the second day of the voyage from South Africa, a message arrived from Vice-Admiral Clark in Norfolk. The rendezvous with the ship carrying the commando unit was to take place in the waters off the Norwegian island of Bouvetaya. The island's coordinates were 54° 26' South, 03° 24' East. The rendezvous point would be about three miles from the island, off Cape Meteor. They were advised to take care when navigating the area, as the seabed was volcanic and very uneven. It was an island virtually unknown to all of them, but not to the Germans, who had some information about it. It was a very curious little island and certainly in the remotest part of the sea.

Bouvet Island, a Norwegian territory, is located at 54° 26' South, 03° 24' East and is approximately 6.5 kilometres long and almost 5 kilometres wide. The highest point is Mount Olavtopperi at 780 metres. It lies some 1,600 kilometres south-west of Cape Good Hope. The centre of the island is the mouth of a volcano known as the Wilhelm II Plain. Glaciers cover most part of the island. The two largest are the Glacier of!

P‹›sadowsky to the north and the Christensen Glacier to the south. Navigation in the area is very difficult as there are no reliable maps and there is extensive volcanic activity that creates whirlpools and very strong currents, as well as the appearance and disappearance of volcanic islets. It is the most remote island on the planet and rarely visited by anyone. Temperatures are extreme throughout the year.

It was discovered on 1 January 1759 by Jean Baptiste Dossier Bouvert aboard the ships Aigle and Marie. He was unable to land, and so the position he recorded for the island was unreliable. Captain James Cook, aboard HMS Resolution, was unable to find the island in 1772. He returned in the same ship in 1775 and again failed in his attempt. Captain Lindsay in 1808 gave the exact position of the island, but was unable to land there. The first to do so was Benjamin Morrell, master of the whaler V?asp in December 1822. On 10 December 1825, the island was sighted again by Captain Norris, master of the whalers Sprightly and Lively. He claimed the island for the British Crown, naming it Liverpool Island. The numerous Norwegian expeditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led the research vessel Norvegia to set up a shelter with provisions for sailors shipwrecked in the area. On 23 January 1928, Bouvet Island became part of Norway. An attempt was made to establish a permanent weather station, but conditions were so hostile that this proved impossible. On a subsequent visit, the shelters that had been set up had disappeared.

In 1934, British Admiral E.R.G.R. Evans, commander-in-chief of the British naval base at Simonstown, undertook a daring mission to the island to verify that no enemy power had established a presence there. He found that the only inhabitants were walruses, elephant seals and penguins. During the Second World War, the island was scarcely mentioned, but in 1955 the South Africans attempted to set up a meteorological station
. After several landings on the island, they failed to find a suitable location and returned. In 1957, the American ship Westwind photographed the island, discovering a new plain to the south
Cape Circumcision, caused by volcanic activity.

During the 1960s, it was concluded that a meteorological station should be established, and so the South Africans

They visited the island to assess its long-term viability. They discovered shipwreck debris such as oars, a black-bottomed boat and other artefacts, but no one knows whose vessel sank there. However, it was the Norwegians who, in 1977, installed an automatic station on the island, connected to the Nimbus 6 satellite. In 1971, the island was declared a Nature Reserve.

Reith marked the position of the submarine and that of Bouveteya Island on the nautical chart. They still had about three days' journey ahead of them.

"Here are the calculations and the course to follow, Captain," Reit h handed over a sheet with the new coordinates. "It's certainly one of the least travelled and most remote places in the world, Captain. It's a good choice for landing the commandos discreetly."

Patrick gazed at the tiny islet lost in the vastness of the South Atlantic.

"I didn't know about it, to be honest," admitted

Patrick. Reith continued:

"Besides, Vice-Admiral Clark knows it's a dangerous island, which is why we'll make the transfer in the open sea near the island. It's a volcanic island with very shallow waters, full of mineral ridges and seamount peaks that could trap and sink any vessel. It would be the end of U-2193."

Patrick nodded in agreement with Reith's words.

—Right, now we must inform Base 211 of the incident we've had with the Nodri Za and that, furthermore, we've lost the three engineers. We don't know what has become of them, nor can we go back to look for them.

John 'Bullet', who was on the bridge, indicated that he would get to work immediately on the ENIGMA machine.

"John, I also want you to inform Vice-Admiral Clark of what happened in South Africa. I'll give you a written copy of what I want you to convey to him later," Patrick sat down in his command chair on the bridge.

"Very well, Captain," 'Bullet' headed for his workstation.

The submarine tirelessly continued its journey of some 1,400 miles to Bouvet Island. The sounds of pods of whales could be heard; to the untrained ear, they could easily be mistaken for ships. John was an excellent sound tracker and

could distinguish them without too much trouble. Eric Jones was also very good at distinguishing underwater sounds. It was extraordinary to have men like that on board. Patrick was pleased as he had enough fuel and provisions on board for a long journey. In any case, once the fifty commandos were on board, daily life on the submarine was going to change drastically. There would be a total of 66 men. Thankfully, it would only be for a relatively short voyage. He was curious to see Blankfort again and observe his attitude towards everyone. He hoped to have no problems with either him or his men. The ship bringing them would also carry additional provisions to supplement those already on board, as well as all the military equipment the commando unit required.

30 November was the date of contact with the American merchant ship Springfalls in the waters off Bouveteya Island. The dive to the rendezvous point proved difficult, because, *as* Reith had said, the seabed was very treacherous. The sonar seemed to go haywire due to the number of submerged topographical features they were passing over. U-2195 surfaced at the exact rendezvous point, but the ship was not there. Nor did the radar indicate any activity for several miles around. After strenuous efforts via radio, contact was finally made in the afternoon with the ship, which had been delayed by a breakdown during its voyage. It would arrive at the rendezvous point on 2 December. The island was very small and it seemed incredible that it appeared on the nautical charts. There was no sign of any activity, neither animal nor human, and it was completely covered in ice, as far as the eye could see. Patrick ordered that the wait be spent submerged at periscope depth for safety reasons. The sea was beginning to show signs of movement, so it would be a restless wait.

Although everything inside the submarine had been prepared for the commandos' arrival, Patrick and Kenneth carried out a final
, checking that everything was ready. The bunks, cupboards,
‹bathrooms, etc. An area was set aside where they would have their various meals of the day, with a folding table at which the soldiers would take turns eating. The big question was all the military equipment they would be bringing with them. In any case, there were some

empty bilges beneath the floorboards where all that equipment could be stowed.

—I hope they can cope with the atmosphere of a submarine. It's not easy.

Kenneth was absolutely right. That was the main problem in finding submarine crew members. The psychological pressure of being confined and the claustrophobia one might suffer made it difficult to find sailors. No matter how well-trained a commando might be for their mission, travelling by submarine could prove too much for their strength and training.

"That's true. It won't be easy for them, Kenneth," Patrick affirmed. "But there's nothing more we can do about that. They already knew that part of their journey would be on our ship, so I prefer to think they're already prepared and mentally ready. They've got about 1,200 nautical miles to go before they reach Antarctica."

Until 2 December, the wait was made difficult by the rough seas. Even whilst submerged, U-2193 could sense the churning waters. Patrick ordered the submarine to leave the holding area and take shelter in a deeper zone where there was less risk of colliding with the crest of an underwater mountain. Indeed, with radar and radio, it would be easy to detect the ship's presence and reach it. Whilst all this was happening, at that very moment, the ships of Operation Highjump were leaving their bases on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts in stages to head for Antarctica.

The die had already been cast.

Chapter 15

OPERATION HIGHJUMP UNDERWAY

The first ship to leave port was the icebreaker Northwind, which set sail from the Boston Navy Yard on the afternoon of 25 November, amid the flashes of the journalists covering the story and the howls of the dog teams, who were barking at the ship's siren whilst confined to their 27 transport crates. Three days later, it arrived at the Norfolk base. Admiral Byrd, aboard the flagship, Mouri t Olymp us, was enjoying a farewell dinner with Dick Creuzen, who had just vacated his former post in his command office 451 2 at the Department of the Navy. An icy wind swept across the entire base, which was a fitting foretaste of what awaited all those men.

The New York Times correspondent, Walter Sullivan, who was to take part in Operation Highjump, noted in the article he wrote covering the departure of the operation's ships that they looked rather strange compared to the large-scale naval operations of the last war. In his article, he highlighted the howling of the dogs as something striking, the Norduyer seaplane bolted to the deck, and the enormous concrete blocks which, once sunk and secured with chains, would act as 'weights' to keep the ships in the Antarctic ports. He also noted the small flat-bottomed boats that would be used to shuttle between ships once they had anchored in Whale Bay. He also

There was one thing to bear in mind: if the coal ran out at Little America, the consequences for the men would be fatal. The coal was stored on deck in wooden crates.

The operation had been highly improvised. Even the day before, huge quantities of food were still being loaded at Mount Olympus. In fact, the total provisions were enough to last well over a year. Those final days had been madness for everyone at the departure bases. So much to load, *so little* time to do it properly, too much information to digest about a strange and distant land which, apart from the operation's commanders, nobody else knew. But everything that could be done had been done, and it was time to set off. Shortly after 3.00 pm on 2 December 1946, the seaplane tender Pine Island set sail from the harbour towards the open sea. Admiral Byrd left the Mount Olympus, to rejoin the operation a month later aboard the aircraft carrier Philippine Sea. In his place, Paul Siple, officially appointed by the War Department as chief representative and scientific adviser to Byrd, would represent him until his later arrival. In an interview on the same quay, Byrd said that 'this vast operation would surely explore half of the unknown part of Antarctica'.

In just over an hour, the ships Mount Olympus, Northwind, Pine Island and Brownson were already in formation, heading out to sea. Off Old Point Comfort, a Navy squadron flew overhead, saluting them and wishing them the best of luck. The ships on either side of the exit channel hailed them with their powerful lights. They passed Cape Henry and the fleet set a southerly course on a voyage of 10,000 nautical miles. Virginia and Norfolk were fading into the misty horizon, and names such as the Caroline Islands or Georgia were now merely names in the distance. At the same time, but at the other end of the North American continent, the Pacific Fleet contingent was leaving San Diego Base, passing Point Loma and also heading south. Only one *vessel* had been left behind, the freighter Merrick, which was still loading equipment on board at

Port Hueneme. It set sail on 5 December at full speed for the Panama Canal, but it would no longer arrive in time for the rendezvous with the other ships.

The Atlantic fleet was making good progress; it rounded the island of Cuba via the Windward Passage and headed for the Panama Canal across the Caribbean Sea. On Saturday 7 December, the four ships passed through the canal and docked at the port of Balboa, on the Pacific Ocean side. There they met up with the submarine Sennet and the oil tanker Canisteo. There they waited for the rest of the fleet coming from San Diego. On the morning of Tuesday 10 December, all the ships were together and ready for the voyage. As soon as they set sail, the ships spread out in a fan-shaped formation, leaving hundreds of miles between them, following their designated routes to Antarctica. The purpose of this exercise was purely navigational. For example, to test the submarine, as the operation could not overlook its scientific aspect either. The submarine Sennet remained alongside the flagship Mount Olympus throughout the voyage, carrying out routine exercises on board. The seaplane tender Currituck flew its helicopter on days when the weather permitted.

On 18 December, the Merrick encountered the Yancey and the oil tanker Cacapon in the middle of the Pacific. With calm seas and clear skies, the two cargo ships manoeuvred alongside the oil tanker, and for hours the three vessels sailed in close formation, exchanging fuel hoses and communication cables. The Yancey and the Merrick "were running low on fuel". After refuelling, the two ships moved away from the tanker and, at full speed, headed south towards Scott Island, where a new regrouping of the fleet was to take place. The tanker set course for the Western Group to join it. By 21 December, they had crossed the region known as the Roaring Forties, notorious for its stormy weather. However, the weather was not bad, and there they had the chance to see the first ice floes at sea. Civilisation and warmth were fading as they advanced southwards. Two days later, they had reached the Nimrod Islands.

Plans on board were gathering pace. On the flagship Mount Olympus, Paul Siple held daily meetings with the group from the



Map showing the routes of each group to Antarctica

from the War Department to prepare them for the "conditions they would encounter". Everyone paid attention. The operational plans were reviewed and confirmed once again. In one of his ‹.reports from on board, Walter Sullivan of the New York Times said that "the The operation resembled the invasions of the War of the Pacific, where "we hopped from one island to another, except that in this case the enemy was the ice and the freezing winds". It was a fairly accurate comparison

to reality. In this instance, rather than the powerful battleships of the Pacific battles, it was more important to have the assistance of icebreakers, such as the Northwind.

Just as the fleet arrived in the Antarctic region over Christmas 1946, the fate of the Central Group was to hinge on the nerves and determination of the entire crew of the Northwind and its captain, Charles W. Thomas, as they cleared a path through the ice for the other ships. But Operation Highjump formally began during the last week of December, and yet the attention of the expedition members and the whole world shifted abruptly not to the five ships preparing to enter the Ross Sea, but to the seaplane tender Pine Island, which was near King Peter I Island in the Bellingshausen Sea.

The Eastern Group, comprising in part the ships Pine Island, Brownson and Canisteo, had a pleasant voyage to the South Atlantic. Several of the ships in that group were also part of the other two groups, and they kept each other constantly informed of developments during the voyage. It was a voyage in which refuelling and the transfer of crew members from one ship to another were the most notable events. When they crossed the dreaded Roaring Forties, they found the sea to be absolutely calm. They even went so far as to build a defence out of wooden poles to protect the helicopter on its platform from the waves, but there were no such waves. Their position was 99° 30’ West longitude; they reached Swain Island on 23 December, finding only calm seas. On the 24th, the first iceberg appeared in the distance. By the afternoon, the sight of icebergs all around the ships was a common and dangerous occurrence. On Christmas Day, they reached the northernmost point of the ice shelf. It was time to get to work.

At eleven o’clock that morning, the Sikorsky helicopter took to the air with Captain George Dufek, commander of the Eastern Group and a veteran of the 1939–1941 expedition, on board, and Lieutenant Walter Sessums at the controls. The helicopter’s mission was to survey the ice barrier, although during the flight they were unable to locate openings large enough to allow for landing and take-off operations. During the flight, communication was suddenly cut off for a period that seemed like an eternity. There was no visual contact either, with

For a while, no one on board the ships knew where the helicopter was. Suddenly, it appeared on the horizon, though its flight was erratic. It reached Pine Island, attempted to land there, but suddenly lost power completely. Something had struck the helicopter. It had sustained damage to one side. In a display of skill, the pilot managed to avoid crashing onto the ship's deck, landing instead in the sea. The icy sea gushed into the tiny cockpit and within seconds both crew members were sinking into the deep, frozen sea. With his head, the pilot managed to break the cockpit's Plexiglas, and through a large enough hole, both men quickly escaped from the sinking vessel.

A rescue barge from Pine Island was already in the water. They were in the water for just a minute before the two crew members were rescued. Walter Sessums said he suffered severe headaches and neck pain for weeks. After initial emergency treatment and finding that they had no serious injuries, apart from near-hypothermia, the two servicemen were discharged. The ship's captain, Henry Caldwell, had a private meeting with the two shipwrecked men. Captain George Dufek had no doubt that they had come under attack from land, as they had been able to see a cylindrical metal structure amidst the ice, although neither of them was able to say what it was or what had attacked them. It was sudden and swift. First, their communications were cut off, and then they had felt a sharp blow to one side of the vessel. It had not been a conventional explosive, of that they were certain, but they could say nothing more. This conversation and the transcript made by Dufek were classified for the rest of the crew, and only the operation's commanders would have access to them. The journalist Walter Sullivan took advantage of the situation to interview the two men, but their answers did not

They made a big deal out of a simple accident and nothing more.

The following day, 26 December, dawned foggy with snow falling incessantly. It was not a day for flying, but the impatient pilots and sailors decided to carry out a test flight with one of the Martin Mariner PBM 'Flying Boat' seaplanes, named George-I. When it was lowered from

On the deck, positioned over the sea and being refuelled, one of the small support barges was swept by the unpredictable Antarctic sea against one of the aircraft's wing floats. The operation was cancelled and the aircraft returned to the ship's deck for inspection. Whilst all this was happening, the sea of ice was closing in on the ships, to the point where it was decided to fire three rounds from the powerful 5-inch gun at the ice floes encircling the vessels. The effect was like firing popcorn at a stone wall. The resolute Captain Henry Caldwell proceeded to run the ship at full power in the hope that the vibration would break the ice. Needless to say, the ice remained firmly in place.

Suddenly, Caldwell and his men on the bridge of the Pine Island were taken aback by what they saw. Three flying discs, the colour of polished aluminium, appeared from the east and passed silently over the group of ships. There was no time to warn anyone, and only some of the sailors on deck saw them. Indeed, some of them did not even realise what they had witnessed. A flurry of messages began to be exchanged between the ships about what they had just seen, but no one could offer a satisfactory explanation. Although he hadn't seen the discs himself, he had heard several eyewitness accounts, and George Dufek was beginning to piece it all together. Something was happening there that confirmed the fear that Antarctica was not just home to ice and penguins. Due to his military rank on the mission, Dufek had indeed been informed of the real objective of the entire operation and what they might find there.

The information was relayed to the other assault groups, which were already moving into their respective designated Antarctic zones. Similar incidents were also being reported by the other groups, without further consequences. From that moment on, Captain Dufek knew exactly what had to be done. He had to immediately dispatch one of the heavily armed Martin Mariner PBM 'George-I' seaplanes to try and ascertain what kind of threat lay before them. He decided to take part in that flight himself. On the 29th at 13.00, the seaplane touched down on the surprisingly calm waters of the sea. At the controls was Pilot Lieutenant John

Mr Howell, the aircraft roared over the sea, climbing shortly afterwards. Captain Dufek, acting as an observer, accompanied the lieutenant, two gunners, a navigator and a mechanic, who made up the aircraft's crew. During several hours of flight, they were able to report only excellent weather, which would facilitate aerial photography and observation work. Nothing unusual was detected. At that time of year, it was always daylight in Antarctica. Consequently, a second seaplane of the same model, but named 'George-II', was permitted to set out on patrol to replace 'George-I'.

'George-II', also heavily armed, took off at 18.50 that afternoon. When 'George-I' returned at 23.05 that 'night', a third sortie was prepared, using this latter aircraft but with a new crew. The aircraft took off again at 02.24 hours on 30 December with Lieutenant Ralph Paul 'Frenchy' LeBlanc at the controls and Lieutenant Bill Kearns as co-pilot. The rest of the crew consisted of Photographic Team Leader Owen McCarthy, navigator Maxwell Lopez, and second-class radio operators Wendell K. Hendersin and James
H. Robbins and the mechanics/gunners Frederick W. Williams and William Warr. Captain Henry Caldwell of the Pine Island also joined the flight at the last minute; he simply could not resist seeing what lay beyond. Nor could he forget his experience as a pilot on patrol missions, until he took command of the Pine Island.

The crew of the George-I was an experienced one, with previous experience of polar flights to the North Pole and combat missions. All except Fred Williams and Captain Caldwell himself had previously served together and knew each other well. Flying conditions were unbeatable and visibility excellent. Radio contact was good and nothing out of the ordinary happened during the first three hours of flight. As the aircraft flew over the Thurston Peninsula, Paul's faltering voice
]-renchy' LeBlanc, the pilot, reported that they had engaged in combat with an enemy aerial formation consisting of several flying discs. He was trying to shake them off, but it was very difficult. They would attempt to return to base. At that point, communication was lost. The patrol aircraft 'George-11', which was in flight at the time,

to head for the area of the Thurston Peninsula, at position latitude 7° 22’ S, longitude 99° 30’, but the search proved fruitless. At 05.41, George-11 returned to Pine Island. The situation was serious and the other two assault groups, which were also under attack from various points by unknown devices and weapons, were alerted.

Chapter 16

ATTACK ON BASE 211

Finally, and one day behind the new scheduled date, on the morning of 3 December, the radar detected the M s the presence of a *submarine* approaching the position of U-2193.

"It's them, Captain," confirmed 'Bullet's' voice.

"How far away are they, John?" Patrick swivelled the periscope's view.

"I can't see them yet."

"They're about 10 miles north-west, Captain."

The sea was rough, which didn't help visibility. On top of that, it was raining heavily and the day was grey.

"Bert, bring us to the surface."

The submarine surfaced in choppy seas *with* icy gusts of wind. Patrick, Reith, Böse and Kenneth went out onto the top of the conning tower. From there, they had a better view than from the periscope level. They were all wrapped up warm and wearing raincoats. They scanned every patch of sea with their marine binoculars.

'There it is! At eleven o'clock,' Reith pointed out.

Böse switched on the signal light to make contact via Morse code. At that moment, 'Bullet' informed Patrick via radio that they had made contact with the Springfalls. They also responded with lights to the submarine's signals. It was them, without a doubt.

The Springfalls drew closer to the U-2193. The ship was a Liberty-class merchant vessel, built during the war and used to supply England and Russia, as well as during the Battle of the Pacific. Allied convoys were made up of this type of ship, which were mass-produced, modular and built quickly. It was 135 metres long and 17 metres wide. The wartime crew consisted of 40 sailors and 30 gunners, as these ships were equipped with anti-aircraft turrets. Its speed was 11 knots, powered by a 2,950-horsepower engine, and it had a range of up to
21,000 miles. Their light displacement was 7,000 tonnes and they could It could carry up to 9,000 tonnes, as well as aircraft, trains, 2,840 jeeps, 440 light tanks and 230 million rounds of ammunition. A total of 2,751 units were built, and more than 200 were lost to enemy attacks. Their silhouette was unmistakable, with their two large cargo cranes at the bow and stern, the gun turrets, the bridge and the funnel in the centre. They were undoubtedly a good choice for that special transport mission to Antarctica. They were also very sturdy ships, well-tested on all the seas.

The approach manoeuvre was complicated and took several hours, as the vessels had to stop on several occasions due to the risk of collision caused by strong gusts of wind and rough seas. During the afternoon, the sea calmed enough to begin transferring supplies and men onto the submarine. The Springfalls also supplied *fresh* and tinned provisions to the crew of U-2195. All of this was gratefully received on board. Once all the supplies had been transferred, the first to arrive via the gangway was Ralph Blankfort, the commander. He seemed to be in a better mood than the last time they had met. Nevertheless, and despite the somewhat cordial greeting, Patrick and his men still did not quite trust him.

One by one, the members of the commando unit began to arrive at the submarine. They were exhausted and somewhat dazed by the harsh weather and the boat journey. Kenneth was right about the suffering those men had endured during their ordeal. Even at that moment, when the sea was relatively calm, the two boats were rocking quite a lot for someone who wasn't

was

was used to it. The final manoeuvre was the refuelling of U-2193, which had just finished filling its tanks. This took place without further incident and the two vessels began their departure manoeuvres, with loud farewells and wishes for a safe journey.

Once on board, whilst they were settling into their berths and living quarters, Blankfort introduced his two team leaders.

'Lieutenant Bert Wilson commands Group 1, Jericho, and Lieutenant Andrew Brown, Group 2, Leviticus. They know their mission and their group. They have been with me on the toughest missions'—the two men smiled at Blankfort's words.

"Welcome aboard," said Patrick, shaking hands with the two men.

"My second-in-command, Kenneth Miele, will explain a few things you need to know about life on board a submarine and which must always be observed. Otherwise, you could endanger the lives of the entire crew, as well as your own."

Kenneth led the two group leaders away to brief them so they could pass the information on to their men.

"Bert, get us out of here and take us on a heading of 1-6-7. Next stop: Deception Island and Base 211," Patrick asked Reith and Bdse to check the heading.

Alongside the torpedo operators and mechanics, the commandos were stowing all their combat gear in the designated compartments.

"There's really enough here to take on the United States," remarked Stan White at the sight of the imposing arsenal they were arranging.

Apart from explosives, almost the entire arsenal consisted of individual weapons, magazines and boxes of ammunition. A member of the commando unit named Bernie Alliston turned to Stan.

"We're going to have our work cut out for us in there..."

"I see the plan you presented is proceeding as laid out," Patrick began when he was left with Blankfort on the bridge.

"Yes. Despite what your men were saying, we've got everything ready to carry out the operation as we'd p1anified‹›

—It's the best plan possible," Patrick nodded at Blankfort's words.

"Would you like a coffee, Captain?"

—I wouldn't mind some. Although I want to see my men afterwards.

—Very well.

They made their way to the officers' quarters and there, over a steaming cup of coffee, the two men spoke frankly.

"I won't lie to you, Captain Blankfort. I don't like you and I don't think you're handling this matter well, but you can count on me and my crew to ensure the success of this mission. I am very clear on Vice-Admiral Clark's orders."

Blankfort stared at his cup and, with a half-smile, replied:

"I appreciate your honesty, Captain Malone. You're not exactly one of my favourite captains either, but I'm grateful for the help you and your men can offer. We're going to need it," he sipped his coffee and added, "You'll understand that I'm not here to win your favour. I'm here to do a job, and I'll see it through. Just give me the support I need and don't worry about anything else." Now, if you'll excuse me, I'd like to meet with my people.

Patrick nodded and continued drinking his coffee after Illankfort had left.

The presence of the 50 commandos disrupted the routine on board the submarine. It was to be expected. Several of those men had some difficulty adapting to such a prolonged stay in a claustrophobic environment like that of a submarine. That, too, could be considered normal. For that reason, Patrick's men tried to help and make their stay as pleasant as possible, given the exceptional circumstances this represented for them. Whenever possible, U-2193 sailed on the surface and they took the opportunity
the chance to go out on deck and get some fresh air.

"You should have seen what it was like to be on one of our submarines," said Stan White to several members of the commando unit who were listening intently to his words. "The U-2193 is a palace compared to those. It's spacious and has amenities that are unimaginable on ours at the moment."

Being on deck wasn't comfortable either, due to the weather and the sea didn't make staying there any easier.

‘What I find hardest to bear is the constant damp,’ remarked one of Blankfort’s men.

Another added:

“I remember a mission I took part in in the China Sea where we were transported for a short distance in a submarine and the humidity was constant there too. The truth is that this submarine is more spacious than that one.”

The submariners present smiled at the complaints.

“That’s one of the hazards of being a submariner. We’re like fish and we need that humidity. It’s normal for us. We miss it,” explained Roger Blaufen, finishing his cigarette.

The dive siren blared. It was time to head back inside. Patrick was meeting on the bridge with Reith, Böse, Kenneth, Blankfort, Wilson and Brown, as he wanted to explain the sea route they would follow to the entrance of Base 211.

‘We are at this point in the middle of the South Atlantic,’ he pointed to the nautical chart Reith had been poring over. ‘We have some 1,300 miles ahead of us until we reach our next objective, which is the British observation base on Deception Island, near the Trinidad Peninsula.’

Blankfort and his men looked at the spot Patrick had indicated on the chart.

“But what does that base have to do with our objective? What’s the point of going there, Captain?” asked Blankfort. “That takes us off course,” he added, pointing towards the Weddell Sea and Berkner Island, off which lay the entrance to Base 211.

“That’s right, but those are Vice-Admiral Clark’s orders. We must attack that British base from the surface, to make our presence known before reaching our true objective. Call it a publicity stunt. The Germans will know it was us, and it will help us get in more easily.”

“I understand,” said Blankfort curtly. Patrick continued:

‘From that point, we’ll turn back towards Drake Passage and head into the Weddell Sea, until we reach

Berkner Island, situated at 79° 30’ South and 47° 30’ West. From there we’ll be facing the entrance to Base 211,” he pointed to the entrance’s position on the chart, which had been calculated by R. Eith.

‘How long will it take us to reach the British base and then the German base?’ asked Bert Wilson.

Kenneth replied:

“At our current speed, and provided there are no setbacks, we expect to reach the British base around 20 December and Base 211 around 25 December.”

Patrick turned towards Blankfort and his men.

“By then, the bulk of Operation Highjump will already be operating in their assigned areas,” he pointed out on the map. “Our mission is running about a week behind schedule, because the Springfalls arrived several days late and it took us a long time to transfer all the equipment. I hope there won’t be any problems for those on the surface during the attack.” Vice-Admiral Clark has already been informed of this delay, but there have been no changes to the navigation plan. For my part, and as my second-in-command Kenneth Łliele has said, I can only go as fast as possible and try to make up time.

‘That could complicate matters, couldn’t it, Captain?’ asked Filankfort.

Patrick tapped his mouth with his pencil.

“That’s right. And the problem, as I see it, is that by the time we arrive, the Germans will already be engaged in combat with our surface forces and will therefore be on high military alert.”

Everyone present nodded in agreement at Patrick’s words. It wasn’t going to be easy.

“Well, we can also look at it as a large part of their troops being out or near the entrance to the base, and that could be a positive,” remarked Andrew Brown.

“We’ll have to come up with a stratagem that allows us to get in quickly and with as little trouble as possible,” Patrick said, looking at the map.

“I think I have a possible solution, Captain,” said Böse suddenly. “On one occasion—Reith can confirm this—we had

A sailor was seriously injured following an attack by depth charges. He was injured when a pipe burst and struck him hard in the abdomen. This happened shortly before my country's surrender, and as we were near Antarctica, the base allowed us entry immediately and without any problems.

The plan was clear.

"I think we can do the same this time, using the excuse of a couple of casualties from the attack on the British base."

Patrick and the others seemed to agree with the proposal.

"It doesn't sound bad in principle, but let's think it through properly and work out how to carry it out."

The meeting continued and they went into further detail regarding

.

The voyage was going well and they had already made up half a day on the accumulated delay. It still wasn't enough, but they couldn't afford to slow down at that stage. Life on board had returned to normal with the commandos on board. Of course, there was a bit less space for everyone, but that was part of the mission. Allan Perkin, the cook, had to double his workload in the galley and was assisted by Eric Jones and torpedo operator Dave Holms as kitchen hands. The submarine passed in front of what was known as Queen Maud Land, which was precisely the entire area occupied by Germany in 1938 and which they had named Neuschwabenland. It was now 13 December.• and Vice-Admiral Clark indicated the positions of the ships involved in Operation Highjump. They were actually very close by, but they could not risk being discovered and continued their journey submerged. Icebergs were an added problem for submarine navigation. For many days, detecting them had been a vital task. The shadow of the TITANIC loomed in all their minds. John 'Bullet' and Eric Jones were steering the submarine with sonar and radar with the utmost precision. Their work was complemented by the information they were feeding to Bert Ecklund and Peter Higgins at the controls and the depth gauge.

Queen Maud Land gradually receded behind them as they entered the northern part of the Weddell Sea, heading towards Drake Passage. The entire Operation Highjump fleet was approaching from the Pacific Ocean, so they would not cross paths with them. Drake Passage

the entrance to Cape Horn, known for its turbulent and dangerous sea. At the bottom lay hundreds of ships from all eras that had been sunk by its terrible storms. And it goes without saying that thousands of sailors had also lost their lives at that cape. Cokburn Island was the gateway from the southern position to Cape Horn, and from there to Deception Island it was some 50 miles. Deception Island was located at 2° 5' 7" South and 60° 36' West, and the U-2193 was already approaching it. The day was unusually clear.

"Take us to the surface, Bert," ordered Patrick.

—We've got the British base in sight. Torpedo room, I need Dave Holms and George Connors on the bridge now. The two reported for duty immediately.

—I need you in the gun turrets. The targets are several bunkers near the coast and the harbour. They have transmission antennas that need to be destroyed. There is also a small merchant ship in the harbour.

The submarine surfaced about 300 metres from the coast. The two men were already in position in their gun turrets. Patrick took up his post in the bow turret with Dave Holms, whilst Kenneth was in the stern turret with George Connors. The British base appeared quiet, and in front of it lay a small harbour containing a medium-sized military merchant ship. The ship's crew saw the submarine imme-diately and immediately sounded an alarm siren. Several men appeared in front of the base's bunkers.

'Fire!' Patrick ordered the gunners.

The two twin 30 mm guns began to fire. The one at the bow swept across the small merchant ship moored in the harbour until a fire broke out on the bridge, which spread rapidly. Several crew members jumped overboard engulfed in flames. The stern turret swept the base's bunkers. The men had no time to flee and were cut in half by the enormous firepower. Then this turret directed its fire towards the two enormous communication masts and the radar of the base, which were visibly damaged.

'That's enough! Cease fire!' Patrick ordered again. 'Dive. Course 1-1-7,' he said, addressing Reith and the helmsmen.

‘That was horrific, Kenneth. Let’s get out of here. I hope it all ends well and that it was worth it.’

Kenneth also climbed down from his post in the stern turret and confirmed what Patrick had said. The two gunners returned to their stations in the torpedo room. The submarine quickly disappeared beneath the waves, heading north towards Cockburn Island, from where it would be able to turn and head south towards the Weddell Sea. There, the sea was rough and travelling submerged was an excellent solution. After navigating around various icebergs, they moved away from the Trinity Peninsula and the Larsen Ice Shelf. These were very dangerous areas to navigate. For this reason, Patrick decided it would be best to cross the Weddell Sea diagonally until reaching the Ronne Ice Shelf, which was a section of the sea completely frozen over, surrounding Berkner Island. At that time of year, the ice shelf would be much smaller as it was summer in those latitudes and there was no night. From there, they sent their final report to Vice-Admiral Clark. They could not risk being intercepted whilst transmitting to other receivers. Clark already knew about the attack on the British base. It had been completely destroyed and more than 20 men had been killed. He made no comment on the matter and simply wished them luck on their mission, hoping to see them all soon in Norfolk. From that moment on, they were on their own until it was all over. Clark’s final instruction was that some ships had already arrived in their assigned zones and that the Eastern Group had encountered some setbacks.

The ENIGMA machine crackled to life, transmitting a message from Base 211. They had already been located and were awaiting their arrival. Patrick followed Böse’s plan and informed the base that they had two seriously injured sailors on board and needed to land as soon as possible. Reith made the communication sound as credible as possible, and it seemed to work. After a moment’s silence, the machine transmitted a new message stating that an aircraft would come to collect the two sailors to buy time.

“They’ve spotted us, Captain!” said Blankfort, somewhat startled.

Patrick tried to keep a cool head. That was unexpected.

"*I* don't *know*, Neo. What they're offering sounds logical. But I wonder what kind of aircraft will make it out here. A helicopter doesn't have that much range. Perhaps it will be a seaplane. We'll just have to wait."

He looked at the chart and checked, according to Reith's latest calculation, that they were still some 260 miles from the entrance to the base.

The radio link opened between the base and the submarine. A loud, clear voice came through the U-2195's loudspeaker. Böse sat down in front of the radio. Reith, Kenneth, Blankfort and Patrick gathered around him. As a rule, they did not give their names over the radio.

'This is base. Do you read me clearly, "Shark"?

'I've got you loud and clear,' replied Böse. 'What's the situation on board?'

'We have two men injured following the last attack. They require medical assistance.'

"Very well. We're aware of what's happened, and a ship will be arriving shortly to pick up those men. We have their position. Prepare a report on everything that's happened and the journey you've undertaken."

"Very well. We'll stay in touch." Böse cut the communication, but left the radio on.

With the radio on standby, John 'Bullet' reported that the radar was picking up a very fast aircraft heading towards their position. Patrick ordered them to surface. They had to play along. The seaplane would surely land near them. Patrick instructed Böse and Blaufen to pretend to be injured. The plan was to destroy the seaplane with the 30 mm cannons. The submarine was already on the surface and Patrick opened the hatch at the top of the conning tower. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. Directly above the submarine's conning tower, completely motionless and utterly silent, was a disc-shaped craft made of polished, gleaming metal. It remained perfectly still, despite the icy wind blowing in from the land. It was spine-chilling. The others came out and stood speechless at the sight. Only the Germans showed no surprise at the craft. After all, it wasn't the first time they'd seen it.

The disc, about 15 metres above the submarine, moved towards the bow and descended slowly until it hovered above the deck without actually touching it. From the conning tower,

Everyone could see the tower crowning the ship and portholes through which they could make out some movement inside, bathed in a bluish light. It was spectacular. Suddenly, everyone had forgotten the reason why the ship was there. It was beyond even the wildest futuristic imagination. Patricia estimated it to be about 30 metres in diameter and 8–10 metres high. At that moment, Patrick snapped back to reality and brought the others back to it too. Blankfort realised that his commandos were about to face something that had nothing to do with either the Japanese or the war in the Pacific. For a moment, he thought there was nothing to be done.

Patrick realised this and sprang into action:

"Quick, Blankfort. There are two or three men in your unit who speak German. We must seize that ship and use it against the Germans. Have them board immediately in their German uniforms! We'll attack from the air and from the sea."

"But that changes everything," said Blankfort, as he called over three of his men, who were ready in an instant.

Reith, Böse, Blaufen and Kenneth, standing on the deck, made their way towards the craft until they were directly beneath it. It hovered about two metres above the deck. Three spheres located on the underside of the craft emitted a faint reddish-blue glow and a very faint humming sound. They had no idea what it could be or what kind of propulsion system the disc had. A hatch was open at the bottom of the craft and a metal ladder extended automatically to the deck. To the Americans, it seemed unreal. Two crew members descended the ladder and greeted the four submariners in a friendly manner. They wore flight suits completely different from any they had seen before. They were metallic-looking and form-fitting, somewhat reminiscent of those worn by high-speed aircraft pilots. SS insignia were clearly visible on the lapels and the eagle on the left sleeve of both crew members. One emblem stood out among their insignia: an embroidered badge on the upper right of the chest, depicting the German eagle clutching the globe in its talons, but the globe was upside down. Antarctica was at the top of the globe and the world map appeared inverted compared to the classic version everyone was familiar with. By

Behind this globe, the four points of a swastika appeared, *like* the sun at dawn. The Earth concealed the central part of the swastika. It was a striking symbol, yet one that conveyed the supremacy of the Antarctic continent and the future they wished to forge in those latitudes. The name Neuschwabenland, in Gothic script, crowned the ensemble at its base.

'Welcome to Neuschwabenland,' said the senior of the two pilots. 'I am Flight Captain Horst Windel and this is Second Lieutenant Karl Linke.

The submariners introduced themselves in turn, with Wolfgang Reith being the supposed captain of the submarine.

"Where are the wounded?" continued Captain Windel, gesturing towards the conning tower, from where a couple of men could be seen scanning the horizon through their binoculars.

Inside, Patrick was feverishly preparing the assault with Blankfort and three of his commandos who spoke German.

"Don't you understand, Blankfort?" Patrick was clear about the situation and what needed to be done. "If we take over that ship and its pilots, we'll have a unique opportunity and we'll be able to attack the German airbase, which is surely underground and we don't know where it is. We must act quickly."

"All right," said Blankfort, who seemed to be regaining his composure after the extraordinary sight of the German flying saucer.

He turned to his men:

"You, Roy, will go *with* Steven and Ron, who will pretend to be injured, since you know how to fly a plane."

As he fastened his German-style leather diving jacket, Roy smiled slightly.

"That's not a plane, Captain Blankfort. I've never seen anything like it before. I'll have to see what I can do."

Blankfort gave his final orders.

"Get our weapons ready and take the transmitters. Let's go!" The small group went out through the side door of the turret and stumbled theatrically towards the disc. Although they tried to hide it, the sight of the flying disc filled them with awe. Böse and Blaufen came over to help them. The SS

‹They watched the scene unfold, whilst the icy wind swept across the submarine's deck

of the submarine. They reached the two crew members, who eagerly set about helping them climb aboard the vessel via the narrow ladder. At that moment, Roy broke away from the group and grabbed Captain Windel from behind by the neck, immobilising him. Lieutenant Linke tried to draw his weapon, but was subdued by Steven Studinger, another member of the commando who spoke German.

"Quick, up! Let's get on board!"

Blankfort led his group and the prisoners energetically down the ladder. A crew member peered through the entrance hatch and realised what was happening. A sharp shot from Blankfort to the face sent him tumbling out, falling onto the submarine's deck with a thud, as if he were a sack.

Blankfort quickly climbed up, pulling ahead of the others, and slipped through the hatch. Inside, he could see two more crew members sitting in front of screens showing the exterior from various angles. He pointed his weapon at them, and they remained where they were. It was a very spacious room, with several flight seats fixed to the floor, but which appeared to be able to move along rails during flight. It was a ship completely unlike anything he had seen before. The rest of the group entered the spacious cockpit. Roy led Captain Windel to what appeared to be the control area and forced him to sit down, just as he had done with Lieutenant Linke. A panel of lights, indicators, dials and gauges of all kinds filled the cockpit, flashing and beeping. They were completely incomprehensible to the new arrivals. Roy, who had experience with various types of aircraft, could not fathom the purpose of those indicators, nor how they worked. He tried to imagine how such an extraordinary craft could be flown.

"Captain Windel, you and your crew are to take us to the airbase of these discs," Steven Stundiger translated Blankfort's orders, in an atmosphere of extreme tension.

"I won't do it. I don't know who you are or which country you represent. This is an assault on a military aircraft. It's piracy."

—I don't have time for speeches right now, but I think it's you who will have to provide the explanations. Your country has been

years ago, and incredibly, a German military force is currently active there. We belong to the free nations and have come to liberate the Antarctic continent from the Nazis. Blankfort pressed the barrel of his pistol against Captain Windel's temple and ordered him once more to fly to the base where the discs are.

"I won't do it," the captain repeated.

A shot killed the German, who slumped over to the right of his pilot's seat. Blankfort didn't beat about the bush.

"Is anyone else refusing to take us to the base?"

The three remaining Germans, Lieutenant Linke being the highest-ranking, took the controls and, at his signal, began to lift the disc slowly. The hatch closed automatically and everyone took their seats and prepared for a journey into the unknown.

"Where is the saucers' base?" asked Blankfort, pointing his pistol at Lieutenant Linke.

"On the Tor Inseln," replied the German officer curtly, pointing to a spot on the map displayed on the screen.

"But that's Berkner Island," said Stundiger.

"We call it Tor Inseln."

In fact, Berkner Island had been discovered by American members of the International Geophysical Year, under the command of Captain Finn Ronne, and the name was given in honour of the physicist Lloyd Berkner who had been a member of Byrd's expedition from 1928 to 1950

Those on the submarine's deck moved away from the underside of the disc and, with a better view, watched with interest as it moved away and gained altitude. It emitted no sound audible to the human ear, only a very faint hum. It was extraordinary, but they had to return to the more pressing reality.

"Blankfort will launch an attack using the captured vessel. That changes a few things, particularly the start time of the operation. We're already underway," Patrick hastened to point out as they all boarded the submarine again. "Now we must head for the base at full speed. Kenneth, I want to see the assault leaders from

each group, Jericho and Leviticus. I also want John to send a coded message to base saying we're on our way there.

Kenneth picked up the intercom:

"Right away, Patrick."

Shortly afterwards, Bert Wilson and Andrew Brown, leaders of the Jericho and Leviticus groups respectively, reported to the bridge and placed themselves under Patrick's command. All of them, along with Kenneth, Böse and Reith, took their seats in the officers' mess.

Patrick got straight to the point:

—As you all know, Captain Blankfort and three of his men have just captured one of those Nazi flying discs and are heading to their base. That changes a few details of the assault on Base 211 itself. In other words, the mastermind behind the assault won't be there, nor will those three men who speak German. I believe you two are very familiar with the plan for the attack, and so are your men.

Brown replied on behalf of the two group leaders:

"Don't worry. Not only do we know our mission, but we are prepared for eventualities such as the one that has just occurred. It need not be a bad thing. On the contrary, it opens up a second front of attack on one of the German defence's weak points: their air force."

Wilson confirmed his colleague's words.

—Right. In that case, all we can do is carry on to our destination. We'll stay in touch with Captain Blankfort and his men and wait.

Using their transmitters, Blankfort and his men tried to contact the submarine, but the disc seemed to be generating a magnetic field that prevented them from using the equipment they were carrying.

"Lieutenant Linke, put me through to submarine U-2193 now."

Linke gently moved a small lever and a click sounded throughout the cockpit, indicating that the transmission was now online.

"U-2193, U-2193, this is the disc. Do you read me?"

"Loud and clear, Disc. What's the situation?" John 'Bullet's' voice boomed through the cabin.

It was a completely different transmission system that allowed for almost perfect audio throughout the vessel. Curiously, the speakers were nowhere to be seen. Blankfort seemed calmer now that he'd managed to connect with the submersible.

—We're heading for the base on Berkner Island. The Germans call it Tor Inseln. Everything's in order and we're ready. We'll be in touch again when we're at the entrance.

"Copy that. We're proceeding at full speed. Over." John cut the communication and looked at Patrick, who was standing beside him.

He looked worried. Everything had happened so suddenly, and he didn't think that was right. He didn't know if Base 211 would be on high alert, or even if they knew what was going on. They had no choice but to carry on towards it. Although there was no night at that time of year in Antarctica, they reckoned they would arrive in the early hours of the morning, based on their time calculations. That might be of some help.

The disc continued its flight and was already approaching the shores of Berkner Island, which was entirely covered in ice. It was an island
100 kilometres long and 140 wide. The screens showed two completely frozen promontories, which could be made out in the distance. They resembled two columns, like a huge gateway in the middle of the island.

'What are those promontories, Lieutenant?' asked Blakfort
, pointing at them on the screen.

—The one furthest north is called Reinwarthhöhe, and the
‹d The one to the south is Thyssenhöhe. In the centre is our airbase, called Fliegerfestung 4.

"What's the position on the map?" asked
Blankfort.

Lieutenant Linke shook his head resignedly.

—It's between 78°19' South and 46°20' West and 79°34' South and 45°42' East, Captain. I can't give you any more information.

'Of course you can, Lieutenant Linke,' said Blankfort contemptuously. 'But that's enough. Put me through to U-2193.'

Lieutenant Linke looked at one of his men who was operating the ship's altimeter. Without a word, and understanding what his superior was indicating, the man opened a safety hatch

from the control panel and pressed a switch. A loud alarm began to sound inside the disc. At the same time, red lights flashed intensely, causing chaos. Whilst the Americans were still taken aback by the sudden alarm, unsure exactly what was happening, the German pilots' seats were ejected through hatches following a quick manipulation of the seat armrests.

The ejection rockets from Linke's seat burned Blankfort's face; he was blinded and slammed into the panel in front of him. He lost consciousness. Steven Studinger and his crewmates tried to sit up and take control of the situation, but it was already too late. The screens showed the promontory known as Reinwarthhöhe approaching at high speed, whilst the disc flew in an uncontrolled sway, yet without deviating from its deadly course. Steven had time to reach one of the control levers. It was useless. He looked at the screen with resignation and closed his eyes. The disc crashed violently and exploded on impact with the ice-covered rock. A powerful flare, like a tongue of fire, shot out from the ice at the point of impact, disappearing immediately. Another disc arrived shortly afterwards and picked up the survivors who had fallen with minor injuries, taking them to Fliegerfestung 4.

The U-2193 was already entering the narrow strait separating Berkner Island from the Antarctic mainland. In winter, this was an extremely difficult area to navigate, as it was covered by a thick layer of ice. At that time, the main navigational hazard was the icebergs, which had formed as a result of the ice sheet cracking due to rising temperatures. The submarine pressed on, avoiding all obstacles. On one occasion, an iceberg grazed the hull plating on the starboard side without damaging the vessel. But the sound inside was incredible. They had never heard anything like it. It sounded as though the whole submarine was falling apart, although nothing serious happened, apart from the fright. They made contact with Base 211 again and apparently everything was proceeding normally. They were expected.

Had Blankfort and his men on board the flying saucer achieved their objective? Had they encountered much resistance?

Doubts plagued the minds of all the submarine's crew, but they could not contact them at that moment. They hoped to meet up with them later.

With Reith and Böse at the helm, they steered the submarine towards the entrance to the base. They veered to starboard to round a small headland where black earth stood out against the white ice. Suddenly, still on the starboard side, the entrance to the base appeared ahead. The submarine was travelling on the surface, and L'atrick thought that under different circumstances and in natural light

‹At that moment, the view from the tower was spectacular. How strange, he thought, to be imagining such things at such a tense moment. It was as if Kenneth had read his mind already

he took a Kodak camera out of a bag and took several photos

‹le the entrance. He looked at Patrick and smiled. He put the camera the bag and looked through the binoculars again.

A huge metal door began to split in two

‹sliding into the rock. It was enormous and must have weighed several tonnes. It was dark grey in colour and could easily go

unnoticed. The U-2195 headed for the entrance to the tunnel, which was wide enough for a submarine. Patrick contacted the frogmen from the two groups who were already ready to launch themselves into the water. The two groups, each consisting of three men, prepared their 'torpedo'-type propulsion units, which would help them reach the

inner docks without difficulty. Each propulsion unit was also a bomb designed to be attached to the submarines moored there. Patrick had the switches to detonate those charges

‹.uando fuese necesario. The divers checked their equipment, which had been protected for the underwater journey. Everything was ready. They entered the upper aft chamber, from where they would exit to the outside. Meanwhile, Group 2, Leviticus, was preparing to go out on deck and reach the base in inflatable boats.

Tex Jenkins, from the Engine Room, opened the filling valve of the stern chamber, which rapidly took on water until the water level covered the six divers and their

equipment. They emerged in an orderly fashion through a

.•hatch and continued underwater, sheltered by the relative darkness of the tunnel and the protection of the submarine's *hull*, though moving away from the propellers. The water was very cold, but their

diving suits protected them adequately. Patrick watched every movement from the conning tower, accompanied by Kenneth, Reith and Böse. They had their weapons at the ready in case of any incident. A sharp click behind them indicated that the enormous door had just closed. There was no turning back.

'Gentlemen, we have just crossed the Rubicon,' said Patrick, speaking metaphorically yet realistically.

Reith nodded in agreement. Lights and installations could be seen directly in front of them, along with some activity from personnel who appeared to be waiting for them at the port, alongside a large group of SS soldiers. The Americans were not at all pleased by this sight.

"It's normal, Captain. Don't worry," Böse reassured Patrick, sensing his fear.

The members of Group 2, Levítico, were already on deck and had three inflatable dinghies ready to reach the hull and, from there, the power station, which was the group's objective. The outboard motors were fitted with silencers that allowed for almost silent navigation. Curiously, the temperature inside was pleasant. As they entered the cavern, beyond the entrance tunnel, they saw the rocky ceiling rising to an incredible height. It was a vast, natural cave. The Germans had made use of this immense underground cavity of nature as their main base.

Dave Holms and George Connors took up their positions in the gun turrets after receiving orders from Patrick. They checked the 30 mm explosive ammunition, the firing systems and the infrared sights fitted to the guns for night-time attacks.

"I don't *think* you'll need it just yet," said Patrick, glancing at the two men at the bow and stern of the tower. "The interior lighting seems quite good. Once Group 2, Leviticus, has taken out the power station, the base will be plunged into darkness, causing confusion, and that will work to our advantage. Stay ready, and open fire on my signal."

"Aye, Captain," came the reply.

He stepped back outside, just as the three inflatable boats overtook them between the starboard side and the rock face at the end of the tunnel. They could barely be heard. The men were crouching and dressed in black. They blended in perfectly with their surroundings, although Patrick wondered if that would be enough:

to avoid attracting the attention of the German guards as they approached the base. The submarine continued to advance majestically, and the harbour and other German submarines of various models moored at the quays were now clearly visible. Metallic sounds and high-pitched sparks were coming from some of them, indicating that they were being repaired or serviced. The situation seemed normal, and the personnel carrying out the work on the submarines could also be seen.

A huge, dark-grey building stood out clearly amongst the port facilities. It was the port control centre, the target of Group 1, Jericho, who were still on board and ready to set off the moment they docked. Long windows allowed a view of the military personnel working inside. Some of them were watching them through binoculars, and everything still seemed normal.

"Let's carry on as before," Reith advised.
"I don't think we're arousing any suspicion."

"I'd pay to know anything about Blankfort and his men on the disc," Patrick muttered under his breath. "I can't understand why they haven't heard anything here."

Kenneth paid it no further heed.

—If they don't know anything yet, that works in our favour, Patrick.

The boats of Group 2, Levítico, had already reached the harbour, which fortunately had a platform jutting out over the sea, forming a sort of canopy under which they took shelter without being seen. They quickly prepared all the climbing equipment to scale up to the harbour. The submarine was right in front of them at that moment, shielding them from prying eyes. A flashing light indicated an empty berth that appeared to be the mooring point. A sound on the port side signalled the presence of a harbour service launch with the pilot on board, who intended to board and guide the submarine to its exact location at the base. They could not refuse this at that moment.

At the same time as this manoeuvre was being carried out, a series of lights came on on the seabed of the harbour, clearly indicating the course to follow towards the flashing light at

his trousers. It reminded him of the lights at an airport that indicate which runway a plane is assigned to. It was something they had never seen before. The Germans smiled at the Americans' surprise. Roger Blaufen was already on deck waiting for the pilot, who climbed aboard with his help. As soon as he entered the submarine, and seeing the look of surprise on his face, he was immediately detained, handcuffed to a rail and kept under guard. He didn't understand a thing. The docking operation was being directed by Reith from the conning tower, communicating via the engines and rudders. The submarine made its way to its berth, escorted on the port side by the service boat. Patrick watched from the conning tower as the commando unit quickly scaled the port side of the ship and took cover behind crates and equipment that had been left there. The 22 men in the group were already ready; Patrick felt extremely nervous. Reith was communicating with the command centre, impersonating the pilot, but he did not know how long the deception could last.

Suddenly, something changed in the activity that had been taking place up to that point. A loud alarm began to blare, and the windows of the command post were automatically covered by armoured shutters. The personnel who had been repairing and maintaining the submarines abandoned their posts and ran towards the interior of the complex. The SS soldiers waiting in the harbour alongside other military personnel and officers readied their weapons and took up positions in bunkers and machine-gun nests scattered throughout the harbour. Two mobile heavy artillery turrets positioned on either side of the command post began to pivot on their axes, attempting to aim their guns at the submarine. Patrick's mind was racing: this was a trap. Group 2, Leviticus, opened fire on several German soldiers who had been taken by surprise by the commando's presence. They also managed to blow up two bunkers that lay in their path towards the base's power station. Two men had fallen in these initial skirmishes. The power station was now directly ahead of them, but it was heavily defended.

Shots could also be heard coming from the port side, where the submarines undergoing maintenance were moored. It was a small group of divers who had already set their charges and were climbing up onto the gangways, firing relentlessly and spreading out

They couldn't do it. One of them fell into the water, struck by the terrible crossfire. They had been spotted, but from the U-2195 they couldn't detonate the charges at that moment; it would have killed the divers. They had to wait. It was time to open fire with the submarine's bow and stern guns. The voice of Andrew Brown, leader of Group 2, Leviticus, rang out over the submarine's radio.

'I need cover!' His voice was a gasp, and gunfire could be heard in the background. 'Open fire on the power station's defences or they'll wipe us out!'

"Take cover, Brown!" ordered Patrick.

The stern turret, commanded by George Connors, trained its two guns on the entrance and raked the entire area with brutal fury. Remains of what had once been human beings, chunks of concrete and sacks of earth flew haphazardly through the air. It was a hellish sight, yet a spectacular spectacle at the same time. Taking advantage of a moment of calm amidst the organised chaos, the commando attached Goma 2 explosives to the high-voltage fence that sealed off the perimeter of the power station compound. A powerful explosion tore a wide gap through which they began to pour in relentlessly. The noise of the fighting was infernal, as the cavern created an *echo* that amplified the sounds of the weapons and the explosions.

Machine-gun and rifle bullets ricocheted off the submarine's armoured hull, but that would not protect them from the two cannons that were seeking a firing angle—a task Reith was not making easy for them as he manoeuvred the sub. There was enough room to bring the submarine round in a tight circle. A huge water tower rose up beside the submarine and a powerful explosion followed. Everyone was thrown back in the conning tower. They had come within a hair's breadth of being hit. The bow guns, directed by Dave Holms, opened fire on the towers and the command building on the port side. With unusual brutality, David swept his target relentlessly. Suddenly, one of the artillery towers began to burn from within. Flames shot out through the bunker's embrasures. Holms had accidentally struck the internal ammunition in the powder magazine, and violent explosions followed the initial fire.

Without warning, the enormous tower burst into a thousand pieces, taking part of the command building with it. A mixture of rubble, bodies, equipment, and so on, came crashing down amidst a hellish roar. Pieces of concrete flew in all directions, forcing everyone to take cover from their deadly impact. A huge cloud of dust covered the entire area, obscuring visibility. It was absolute chaos, but chaos from which an advantage could be gained.

"Take us to the deck, Reith!" ordered Patrick, getting to his feet and gauging the right moment for them. "Bert, get your team ready. They're coming out!"

Bert Wilson was ready, as were his men. They were eager to get into action. The submarine approached the nearest landing craft, and Group 1, Jericho, disembarked there. Once ashore and amidst the confusion, they managed to advance towards the command building, which was beginning to look a sorry sight following the massive explosion. There was practically no resistance, only corpses. Two commandos managed to climb up to the main embrasure of the turret, which was still operational. Two powerful charges silenced that threat once and for all. A semi-tracked armoured vehicle appeared on the right, dodging the rubble and opening fire with its machine guns. Several men from Group 1, Jericho, fell, some wounded, some dead. One of Wilson's men managed to climb onto the vehicle and threw two hand grenades through the half-open hatch. As he jumped off the vehicle, he tripped over some rubble and fell beneath the tracks, which crushed him. A massive explosion followed this scene, turning the armoured vehicle into an uncontrolled fireball that continued on its way to the embankment, from which it fell into the water with a great crash. It all happened very quickly.

Group 2, Leviticus, entered the *zzI dinner hall,* where there was no longer any armed resistance, and took control of it. On Andrew Brown's orders, a detachment remained there on guard, whilst the rest pressed on to meet up with the other group and the divers. There was no need to cut the power to the control centre at that point. The battle for the port seemed won, but there were still pockets of resistance and machine-gun nests. One by one, they were silenced until

the entire perimeter of the port was secured. Brown and three of his men fell in these final skirmishes. Reith and Bc›se could not believe what had happened there. They would never have imagined they would take the base with such relative ease, but that was how it had been. It was certainly not the entire complex, but it was its most important part.

Chapter 17

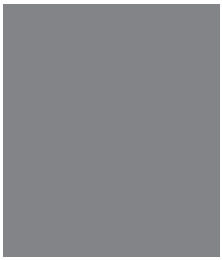
GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

EGeneral SS Hans Kammler stormed into the command post of the underground airbase Fliegerfestung 4 shortly after the arrival of the rescue team that had saved what remained of the disc's crew. The entire technical team, pilots and air traffic controllers stood to attention, their heels clacking loudly. All of them wore the Antarctic emblem on their uniforms, positioned at the top of the globe, with the continents inverted compared to conventional maps. All of them belonged to the SS. Only General Kammler retained his classic Second World War uniform, devoid of any Antarctic motifs.

'What on earth is going on here? I want a full report immediately!' he bellowed, whilst his immediate aides, two Unterschar-Führers, took up strategic positions on either side of General .

'I've received word of a large American fleet arriving from the Pacific; it's taking up positions at three key points. Here, here and here!' he emphasised, pointing to three locations on the Antarctic map on the wall.

"General," interjected a young Unterscharführer, "we have had aerial visual contact with the three groups you indicated, as they were arriving from the Pacific Ocean. From our bases in Chile, we have tracked them in the Pacific. It is an American combat force comprising 13 ships, including an aircraft carrier that is en route and a submarine. We do not know



SS General Dr Hans Kammler

the number of troops and aircraft at their disposal. Nor do we know what their plans are at this moment. We are monitoring the situation.

The others nodded in agreement with the young officer's words.

'But can't you see it's obvious?' Kammler turned back to the map. 'They're setting up their bases at these three points I've shown you, and they'll cross the continent from the south to drive us towards the sea. They'll encircle the whole of Neuschwabendland. We must attack right now, before they even set foot on ! We cannot allow them to establish three bridgeheads! Otherwise, we won't be able to drive them out of there," he glared at them all angrily. 'Remember Normandy!' he added.

Immediately afterwards, amidst great tension, he addressed the survivors of the disc who were trying to stand to attention despite the painful injuries they had sustained after abandoning the ship and parachuting down.

—'What happened, Lieutenant Linke?'

Linke began his account:

—We were alerted by Base 211 to the arrival of submarine U-2195, commanded by U-Bootoffizier Reith, as Captain Li ppsmac had died in action several months earlier. They had some wounded on board and needed immediate assistance, so we went to collect them and take them to the base hospital. Once there, we were ambushed by a commando unit that murdered Captain Windel and managed to seize control of the disc. Whilst we were in flight, and given the commando unit's intention to penetrate and attack Fliegerfestung 4, I decided to abandon the craft with the remaining crew members and let the disc crash into the members of that commando unit. That is what we did.

Kammler listened attentively to Lieutenant Linke's explanation, but he intervened again.

—As well as the fleet bearing down on us, we'll also be under attack from within at Base 211. You've already seen what happened to the crew of the disc. We've lost one of our

ships, and the enemy has captured one of our submarines and is surely already in the vicinity of our base. That is their plan, and in this way they will open a second front right under our noses.

He sat down in one of the flight controller's chairs.

"I want to see all the squadron commanders and ground troop commanders now. In the main hangar of this base within an hour at the latest!"

A flurry of urgent orders was sent from Fliegerfestung 4 to three other disc bases and two underground bases, including Base 211. The U-2193 was entering that base at that very moment, which immediately triggered the alarms and set in motion the defence and neutralisation of the attack.

As officers arrived at Fliegerfestung 4 from various points of origin for the convened meeting, news also began to arrive.

'We have bad news, General,' remarked one of Kammler's aides, a teletype in his hand. 'Base 211 is under attack from U-2193 and several commando groups, who have managed to destroy the port's command building and the fortified towers, and have taken the power station. There are many casualties and the fighting continues.'

Kammler took the document and read it. His face betrayed no emotion. What he had predicted was coming to pass.

"Let's move on!" he ordered.

It was time to act. They continued walking towards the immense hangar situated above the control facilities. The whole complex lay underground, making use of the enormous caverns they had discovered long ago during their first expeditions to Antarctica. The temperature was very pleasant, as they had managed to harness the natural geothermal sources that abounded in Neuschwabenland, allowing for an almost normal way of life.

Some guards opened an armoured door and the magnificent natural hangar appeared before them. They continued walking amongst several flying discs sheltered there. Their burnished aluminium colour and design were completely unlike any aircraft of that time. Three different models could be distinguished, varying in size. Kammler felt very proud of these ships, as it had been his Kammlerstab who had

He had spent years developing it. Now everything was in jeopardy and his plan to revive a Fourth Reich could be thwarted. He would not allow that to happen. It had already happened once because of the vast number of traitors who had betrayed the Führer, but he had now managed to surround himself with the best people, all in the strictest secrecy. The Americans had no idea what they were up against.

As he walked resolutely towards the area where the meeting was to take place, and where he could already see a few officers, he recalled his gruelling journey there and his responsibility for the entire project. He recalled how the Führer, during his last visit to Berlin in early April, before the Russian pincer movement closed in on the doomed city, had privately entrusted him with continuing his work, free from traitors and with all the technology he had managed to develop. He was struck by seeing Hitler in that state, yet fully resolved to fulfil the historic role he was destined to carry out. All these Antarctic facilities had already been prepared during the war, but since 1944, Kammler had also given impetus to this titanic undertaking, having been able to exploit the advantages of the caves and their excellent temperature, as well as his extensive expertise in the construction of all kinds of underground facilities, just as he had done in Europe. Antarctica was the ideal place to start afresh and avoid repeating the same mistakes. Kammler had managed to prevent the capture of scientists by the Allies and the Russians and was sending them to Antarctica with the PÁG 200. As the Führer had said, in his role as an SS general, he had been as agile as a greyhound, as tough as leather and as hard as Krupp steel. These were not times for hesitation, doubt or timid spirits. He managed to move the ‘person’ from Peenemünde to Oberammergau in Bavaria in mid-1945, in a spectacular operation right under the noses of the Russians and Americans. He managed to create the legend that he was still alive and appeared in public in Jacin, Czechoslovakia, shortly before the end of the war, in a perfectly planned operation. He even staged four possible deaths, ranging from his own suicide,

‹Whether he had fallen in battle against the Russians, been executed by partisans, or even killed by his own men, he had managed to fool everyone. Now he was in the midst of his enemies. He smiled as he walked.

He still remembered the Junkers Ju 290 A-5, serial number 110178, which had been prepared at Berlin-Tempelhof after being withdrawn from service in the Luftwaffe as a civilian aircraft in September 1944, but which belonged to KG 200. Lufthansa had done a good job of converting it, assigning the registration D-AITR and the name 'Baviera' to it in October of that year. Flughauptmann Paul Sluzalek managed to fly the aircraft to Prague, where he *picked* up all the men from Kammler's direct team, Kammler himself and a huge amount of material and documents, and transported them to Barcelona on 26 April 1945, on a hellish flight. The Spanish authorities refrained from identifying the Germans on board the aircraft after it landed in Barcelona. General Franco, despite not having been a truly involved partner in the final victory, was assisting German scientists and military personnel in their escape to more hospitable lands, both in Spain and in Latin America.

Kammler and his aides arrived briskly at the area designated for the meeting. An Antarctic map had already been mounted on a vertical stand. The map showed, with arrows, the position of the enemy fleet and its planned docking points. Another arrow indicated the attack by U-2193 on Base 211. The situation of the various German bases was also shown on it. It was all up-to-the-minute information. Upon Kammler's arrival, the officers stood to attention. The stragglers arriving from the most remote areas of Neuschwabenland also arrived at that moment. The flying discs entered almost silently, an impressive sight for anyone unaccustomed to their presence. After touching down, the crews disembarked quickly to take their places at the meeting. There were about 30 flying discs in the hangar at that time. The maintenance staff carried out their work on the newly arrived craft with the utmost discretion. Among the ground crew were several women who performed these maintenance tasks alongside their male colleagues.

All those summoned took their seats. There were nearly 100 officers from the land, sea and air forces. They all wore the Antarctic embroidered badge and, above all, stood out for their youth. Kammler climbed onto a small platform from where he could see

with some difficulty the entire audience, who, with expectant faces, awaited news from the general, the highest authority in Antarctica. The map was to the left and the two aides took their seats at a side table to Kammler's right. From behind the podium, the general began to speak.

I have summoned you here with the utmost urgency because, as you will be aware, we are under full-scale attack by enemy forces originating in the United States—with a wooden pointer, he moved towards the map to his left and continued his address. The attack is divided into two parts. On the one hand, three groups comprising a fleet of 13 ships, which have taken three different courses in Antarctic waters and can easily be named after the latitudes at which they are located: the Eastern Group, the Central Group and the Western Group. Among the attacking force are: an aircraft carrier that is approaching and a submarine, plus an undetermined number of aircraft. We have already made visual contact with them and have even shot down one of their aircraft — he pointed out what seemed obvious given the direction taken by the fleet. From what we have learnt from our agents in South America, the attack expedition is led by Admiral Richard Byrd, quite a figure among the Americans, who is aboard the aircraft carrier Philippine Sea.

Kammler smiled as he mentioned the admiral's name, then continued.

—Furthermore, and more dangerously, Base 211 is currently under attack by one of our own submarines that has been captured, the U-2193, which has managed to breach the base's defences and has landed commandos who have launched a surprise attack. One of our discs, commanded by Captain Windel, was captured by members of the commando unit aboard the submarine and was neutralised by the crew themselves during its journey to this base. Captain Windel and a member of his crew were killed in the attack — a murmur of surprise rippled through the audience. K.amm1er continued: 'I understand what you are thinking and the surprise this attack has caused you, but this day had to come. Our situation, though well kept secret, was not going to last forever. Our ships have flown across the five continents since the end of the war. They have proven their worth, improved their technical performance and trained crews well

They were virtually indistinguishable in use, but at the same time their origin was clear despite the lack of markings. All our enemies were aware of our technical superiority in every field. Our contacts with Chile, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa could not go unnoticed by the enemy, and above all by the global enemy that has been waging a war to the death against Germany since before our Führer, who fell at Bertín, came to power, and which will not cease in its determination to destroy us. We are the only ones they truly fear, for we have exposed their insolence and their desire to enslave all of humanity.

Kammler was referring to the Jews. The audience affirmed Kammler's words. The general returned to his podium.

—We shall not waste any time, nor shall we allow them to establish their bridgeheads in the ports, which they will undoubtedly attempt to do. We have several advantages, such as our sophisticated weaponry, our knowledge and experience of Antarctica—which far surpasses theirs—and, above all, a fighting spirit that our enemy lacks. It must be a merciless struggle, with no prisoners. Our future is at stake, that of our ideas and that of our people and race. Europe failed to follow our ideas in the face of Bolshevik barbarism and degenerate American society. And both are manipulated by the global enemy, our true enemy.

The audience was truly inspired by the words of Kammler, who was a true man of action. Murmurs of approval followed his every word.

'We will form three combat wings that will depart from the bases closest to each enemy group,' he said, pointing once more on the map to air bases 1, 2, 3 and 4, with their corresponding enemy groups to be destroyed; 'and as for Base 211, the most important one, it will be recaptured by ground troops, with armoured support. That submarine and its commandos will not leave there. I now want to see every commander of an airbase and ground troops, to finalise the groups, their commanders, the attack, and set off immediately. Let our attack begin!

As he uttered these words, several voices were heard among the officers, who began to sing the anthem of Neuschwabenland, set to the tune of an old German folk song entitled

Westerwald. Soon everyone was singing the song in unison, stamping their boots on the cold concrete floor and sending spirits and enthusiasm for the upcoming battle soaring. Even the maintenance staff joined in with that spontaneously sung anthem. Kammler looked at them with pride; he knew he could count on them right to the end.

Chapter 18

OPERATION HIGHJUMP IN DANGER

FAdmiral Richard Byrd was aboard the new aircraft carrier USS Philippine Sea on his first combat mission.

The rest of the fleet had already reached their target areas, and the news reaching him was not as good as he had hoped. He recalled the press conference aboard the aircraft carrier and how, in response to their controversial questions, he had been forced to confirm that he was prepared to leave a detachment of 30 men behind beyond the operation's scheduled duration, in order to search for the crew of the missing aircraft 'whenever there was the slightest possibility that they might still be alive'.

Everything was very confusing because the men didn't understand what those flying machines were, who was piloting them, or many of the inexplicable things they were seeing – but above all, what they were doing in Antarctica. It was a very difficult time, and a dramatic turn of events was needed to prevent morale from collapsing. Byrd wanted to be there as quickly as possible, as he was convinced that his presence could restore enthusiasm for Operation Highjump. The aircraft carrier was also a powerful vessel capable of intimidating any potential enemy.

The weather was also not cooperating for the missions planned in Antarctica, and the aircraft were unable to carry out the scheduled flights. Amidst fierce blizzards and thick fog, the days passed in a monotonous routine. All of this added to the frustration felt by the crew and soldiers



Map showing the attack areas of the three groups of Operation Highjump

a sense of inactivity on the one hand, and the nature of the enemy they were facing. Rumours were spreading like wildfire, as news from the other groups was unclear too, giving rise to all sorts of speculation. It was said that they were facing German troops, and *there was* even talk that they had captured a Martian and his spacecraft! This had to stop immediately or the whole operation would be in serious danger. Byrd would personally take part in the flight operations alongside the men.

Around 10 January 1947, a small blue patch began to appear in the sky. The weather was starting to improve. Days earlier, the Central Group (Task Group 68.1), led by the flagship Mount Olympus, had begun to penetrate

the Ross Sea and its ice shelf. It was a very difficult voyage, as they had to navigate around the icebergs that the ice shelf had broken up into due to rising temperatures. The group stopped their engines and it was decided that the icebreaker U3S Northwind would enter the ice shelf. At midnight, having advanced some distance and lost sight of the other ships, the HOC-4 helicopter took off from the wooden deck with Captain Thomas as an observer. The idea was to see if there was a possible safe passage through the cracked ice. The sun at midnight was rather strange, thought Thomas as the helicopter rose gently. After surveying the area to the north, they were indeed able to observe 'blue avenues of sea between the ice' that could allow the rest of the Central Group's fleet to pass through. Although they were far from the mainland, the view to starboard of the Transantarctic Mountains was spectacular. But their blood ran cold when they saw, silhouetted against the light, a formation of ten flying discs heading north at high speed, passing over the frozen mountain range.

"Turn back immediately," Thomas ordered the pilot, clearly agitated.

"What was that, Captain? They looked like flying discs," asked the pilot, also unsettled by the sight.

"I don't know, Jimmy, and I'm not staying here to find out. Now fly skimming the ice, as fast as you can, back to our ship. Keep your mouth shut about this."

Jimmy looked at him as he moved the stick and the helicopter turned towards the Northwind.

"Right, Captain," he added.

After the helicopter landed, Thomas urgently contacted Admiral Creuzen on the Mount Olympus, informing him of what he had seen during the flight.

Creuzen called an urgent meeting with all the group leaders from the five ships to brief them directly and decide on the most appropriate course of action in light of these new developments!i. Creuzen stated that despite what the helicopter crew had seen, the operation would continue as planned and they must reach the coast to set up the Little America IV base camp. It was a mission critical to the success of the entire Operation Highjum.

The officers raised no objections, and the utmost discretion was maintained regarding what had occurred. They would pass the Ross Barrier immediately. After the meeting, Admiral Creuzen briefed Admiral Byrd, who was on board the aircraft carrier and en route. He fully agreed with the decision taken, urging them to exercise the utmost caution in the event of a possible encounter with enemy forces. The ships' shore and anti-aircraft batteries were put on alert before setting sail.

The fleet set off, led by the icebreaker Northwind, followed by the Merrick, the Yancey, the Mount Olympus and the submarine Sennet. They maintained a speed of five knots, following a course as close as possible to the 180th meridian. But bad luck threatened the Central Group, as the ice, as they advanced, was much thicker than expected and they began to be surrounded by icebergs. The grey sky on the night of 31 December 1946 to 1 January 1947 created the classic scene where one could not distinguish sky from sea on the horizon. Surprisingly, the ships reached an area with less ice, and it was even considered that the submarine Sennet might make a dive—the first by an American submarine in those waters, carrying correspondent Walter Sullivan on board—to observe the ice from the depths. It was deemed too risky, as the danger of submerged ice was a serious problem and the surface ice had regained its thickness, making progress difficult. Forty-five minutes past midnight, the order was given to stop the ships' engines, as it was impossible to continue the voyage and manoeuvre in those conditions. It was time to put the icebreaker Liforthwind to work. Over the next 30 hours, Captain Thomas drew on all his experience of polar navigation to guide the fleet towards land. It was a gruelling task because with every mile covered, the ice would tighten its grip on the ships once more, scraping their hulls, bursting rivets and causing minor damage to the propellers. It was a veritable frozen hell.

During one of the technical stops, whilst the men on the Blorthwind were manoeuvring to free the ships held up further back, the radar operator urgently informed Captain

Thomas that he was picking up two aircraft heading rapidly in their direction. The captain looked at his first mate with concern.

"Just what we needed. Tell the rest of the ships to prepare their anti-aircraft batteries. We're going to have trouble."

From the Northwind's radio room, Thomas's first mate radioed the order to all the ships, which prepared their armament without delay. Nothing was yet visible on the horizon, and the tension was mounting, heightened by the ships' predicament in the ice trap. The Northwind continued to manoeuvre, powerfully cutting a path through increasingly thick ice.

Suddenly and without warning, two flying discs passed overhead at an unimaginable speed and without a sound. It was extraordinary. They bore no markings to indicate their origin. The gun crews had no time to manoeuvre their guns and aim them at the craft. They watched as the two discs separated whilst climbing almost vertically at a prodigious speed. They began a dive from different angles towards the small fleet trying to escape its icy trap. The guns began to fire.

"Everyone take cover!" shouted the loudspeakers on the ships.

The sailors, without realising it, were standing on the decks, watching the discs and their incredible manoeuvres. It was extremely dangerous to remain there. They all quickly took cover. The tracer rounds marked the trajectory of the shots, and it was easy to see how difficult it was for the gunners to track the discs' flight. One of the craft flew skimming the ice, leaving behind a high curtain of pulverised ice and heading straight for Mount Olympus. It looked chrome-plated, with an intense sheen. Portholes could be seen at the top of the craft. The gunners trained their guns on the disc and swept the path of its flight. Inexplicably, the projectiles seemed to bounce off without touching the shiny surface of the flying machine. It appeared to have an invisible shield protecting it from external attacks. The disc was on the verge of crashing into Mount Olympus, which was trapped by the ice sheet, and rose almost vertically into the sky, disappearing behind a cloud front.



The submarine USS Sennet, damaged by the attack and battered by the ice, left Antarctica

Nerves were on edge. The crew had no idea what they were up against; whatever it was seemed indestructible. They were anxious. The second disc fired what could be described as a highly visible black beam at the submarine Sennet, which was also trapped and bringing up the rear of the fleet, some distance behind the others. The bolt did not strike the submarine directly, but the ice surrounding it, which brutally struck the sub's hull and caused a large amount of ice to accumulate on it. Several crew members were injured by the blows caused by the ice against their vessel. It was in real danger of sinking as it was listing slightly. The disc rose and also vanished into the clouds. A desperate distress signal was flashed from the Sennet's conning tower. With great difficulty, the Northwind reached its position and found

It was clear to see that a large section of the hull was damaged and had serious dents, which meant the vessel could not continue without repairs. One of the depth rudders was bent and inoperative. The crew were struggling to clear the vast amount of ice from the narrow deck, which Captain Thomas estimated might weigh several tonnes. Joe Isinghour, captain of the submarine Sennet, looked terrible as he was also injured. It did not appear to be serious, but it was a sight to behold as blood had stained his uniform and he looked rather pale. He greeted Thomas from the conning tower, thanking him for his swift arrival despite the circumstances.

Whilst this was happening, the Merrick struck an ice bank, causing a leak that had to be repaired immediately. The sailors kept scanning the horizon anxiously through their binoculars for two reasons: to watch out for possible enemy ships and to try to catch a glimpse of sunshine that might break through the grey, depressing light that enveloped them. Admiral Creuzen wanted more information about the reconnaissance flights carried out by the Western Group from the Currituck. The reports spoke of a thick, impenetrable layer of ice, increasingly frequent sightings of flying discs, and the loss of one of the Martin PBM aircraft and a helicopter. With this information, the establishment of Little America IV Base was in serious jeopardy. The weather was also mercilessly battering the fleet, as visibility was practically *zero.* Both Creuzen and Thomas were eager to move and get out of the quagmire, and so the Northwind set off again, managing, after arduous efforts, to reach an area of open sea—a sort of immense lake amidst the ice—and allowing all the other ships to reach that point. In any case, they could not anchor there either, as the depth was more than
2,000 metres. The vessel in the worst condition was the submarine Sennc't which, with great difficulty, was able to keep up with the other vessels and was situated in a small lake amidst the ice. Creuzen realised that Antarctica was no place for the submarine. It was decided that it would be towed by the icebreaker Northwind to the open sea, from where it would continue on to Chile. Until ^4



One of the R4Ds taking off from Little America IY. You can see the ski system in place of the conventional landing gear

On the morning of 4 January, the submarine was not properly moored for towing and was waiting in the middle of the small harbour.

Creuzen called a meeting with the officers and, after assessing the situation, turned to Captain Thomas.

"What would you do, Tommy?" Thomas looked at the other officers present.

The whole of Operation Highjump was racing through his mind at breakneck speed, but his analytical skills gradually sorted through the various situations that had arisen up to that point. His thoughts were that the commander of Central Group 68 was facing the following situation:

The missing aircraft from the Western Group, with its eight crew members

A missing helicopter

The central group of the operation was hopeless and at *the mercy* of the icebergs

The damaged submarine Sennet was in a lake that could close in and crush it

Discontent and demoralisation among a large proportion of the crew and troops.

Adverse and unpredictable weather conditions

Whilst the meeting was in progress and solutions were being discussed, news arrived that Admiral Creuzen's 22-year-old son, Nathaniel Green Creuzen, had been found dead following an accidental discharge from a hunting shotgun. The news was brought by Jim Minny, the officer attached to Creuzen, who mentioned it privately to Captain Thomas. They concluded that it was not the best time to tell him, as the operation was in full swing and it would be a devastating personal blow. For that reason, they also decided that all messages of condolence that would surely reach the ship should be held back by Minny until the general situation improved and the ships were out of danger. It was news that greatly complicated the situation, and they understood that this was the best way to deal with it.

On 6 January, the Northwind managed to bring the submarine Sennet to safety in the open sea north of Scott Island. The ships were now in a better condition and Creuzen was in much better spirits. This was the moment chosen to tell him privately, as gently as possible. After a moment, Creuzen said:

'Forgive me, gentlemen, I wish to be alone for a while, and I thank you for having kept this discreet until now. Truly, I tell you...'

For ten minutes he was alone in his private cabin, and then he appeared before his men, who were waiting expectantly, and began to discuss the operations planned for the Central Group. He never spoke of the matter again.

The Central Group was once again making progress at a dreadful pace, and they were already beginning to wonder if there would be any suitable landing site upon reaching the Ross Coast. There were several places considered suitable, such as Whale Bay and the former Scott and Shackleton sites at McMurdo, but these were somewhat further away. It was decided to increase speed to eight knots whilst navigating with the utmost caution. The only thing that worried...

The officers' hope, amidst all those problems, was that the enemy flying ships had disappeared for the time being.

By 11 January they were already close to the coast, but were facing great difficulties due to the ice which, in a capricious and unexpected manner, surrounded the ships and forced the entire convoy to turn back in search of another route forward. In the afternoon, they managed to spot two Martin Mariner PBM aircraft belonging to the Currituck of the Western Group. This filled them with hope. The aircraft were flying low and advanced a further 35 kilometres, but then turned back towards their ship as a bank of fog was moving rapidly in their direction. They were observing...



The aircraft carrier 'Philippine Sea' en route to Antarctica. The flight deck can be seen practically crammed with fighter planes

I was looking through my binoculars when one of the planes made a sudden move towards the starboard side, as if avoiding something that couldn't be seen from the ships. A powerful burst of flame shot up from the ground and struck the plane on its right wing. It soon turned into a ball of fire and crashed noisily into the snow.

'They're waiting for us on the coast, Admiral. I think they know where we're going,' said Thomas, looking at Creuzen, who could hardly believe what he'd just seen.

"What sort of weapon was that?" He lowered his binoculars, his expression leaving no room for doubt. His thoughts turned straight



Another R4D refuelling for a new flight

to the meeting they'd had in Norfolk and the photos Admiral Byrd had shown them, regarding German activity detected in Antarctica.

"Look there, Admiral!" Captain Thomas pointed to a spot in the sky.

The other plane was trying to shake off a disc that was relentlessly pursuing it. Suddenly, the plane burst into flames. The crew jumped out with parachutes. The disc appeared to emit a black beam that instantly pulverised the parachutists. From the ships, they could do nothing for those unfortunate souls, nor could they fire at the disc as the distance was considerable. That terrible sight was witnessed by a multitude of sailors and soldiers on deck, causing widespread distress at the helplessness of their attack and defence systems in the face of such futuristic weapons. These were new headaches for Admiral Creuzen and his officers.

Whale Bay was already in sight, and from what could be seen, it looked as though the base could be set up. It was already mid-January, and the aircraft carrier USS Philippine Sea was approaching, with Rear Admiral Byrd on board and eager to arrive and fly over the area. The news he had received was discouraging, but they had to turn things around. The decisive phase of Operation Highjump was about to begin. There was no turning back.

Chapter IP

BRIDGEHEAD AT BASE 211

The situation seemed calm at that moment. The entire perimeter of the port and the power station was under the commandos' control and secured. The first phase of the battle was over. The two groups prepared to leave the area and enter the civilian part of the base, which they imagined lay beyond all that rubble and the ruined buildings. The light that seemed to emanate from the cave itself was curious, meaning that spotlights or torches were not needed to make their way forward. In fact, the captured power station appeared to be providing light and electricity to the buildings and facilities, but not to the... cavern in general.

Patrick and the crew of the U-2195 descended into the hull via the submarine's narrow ladder, having taken the 11 injured men on board. Dr Philip Louis Hill had his work cut out for him after a smooth journey there. He set up a makeshift operating theatre in the central section of the submarine, next to the officers' quarters and therefore the widest part of the vessel. Eric Jones and Allan Perkins assisted him as best they could, but with the utmost dedication. The dead from the assault party lay in a row on the deck beside the submarine, inside body bags for the transfer of the corpses. Of course, they could not be taken back on board, and so they would be sunk at sea as soon as possible. For a moment, in silence, the submariners looked at the bags containing those who had fallen. Then they carried on.

Patrick and his men made their way through the entire area of the gun towers and the port command building, which lay in ruins. Corpses could be seen half-buried amongst the rubble. It was a truly gruesome sight. There were no prisoners, which gave an idea of the ferocity of the fighting. They reached a slightly elevated point which marked the edge of the security perimeter. There, Brown and several commandos had an observation post from which they could see the rest of the base, beyond the port area. Patrick picked up a pair of binoculars and looked at what lay ahead. It looked like a street lined with various buildings, stretching into the depths of the immense cavern.

"What do you think, Captain Malone?" Brown smiled, though he looked somewhat concerned.

"There's no activity at the moment. It's very strange. What do you think, Brown?" Patrick set the binoculars down on a rock.

"I'm not sure; this situation takes me by surprise," he said, looking at the whole group and his men, who seemed ready to press on, "but I think we should make the most of it and push forward as far as we can right away."

Kenneth seemed to guess Patrick's thoughts

"Where does Base 211 end, Lieutenant? Perhaps it's vast, and there are too many of us."

Brown fell silent after Kenneth's question. Neither Bdse nor Reith could give a concise answer, as they barely knew the interior. They had previously only been to the port and on short stopovers to unload supplies and personnel.

Patrick spoke up after a brief silence from the whole group.

"I think we need to make radio contact with Admiral Byrd, who, according to the schedule, should already be arriving in Antarctica. He will give us new orders. Give me half an hour before we move on, Lieutenant."

Brown agreed to Patrick's request and instructed his men
'to check all their combat gear again before
*.continue. Patrick returned to the submarine with John 'Bullet' and Kenneth. Several German submarines had been left there abandoned after
the fighting. They were older models than the U-2193 and were of little interest at that time. It was, however, worth bearing in

that several of them had explosive charges attached and were ready to detonate, if necessary.

The radio crackled and there seemed to be problems making contact the USS Philippine Sea. John skilfully turned the dial, but to no avail at that moment. Patrick was nervous.

"Try to tune into the Central Group's frequency and speak to Rear Admiral Creuzen. He knows we're here and can guide us."

After several attempts, the radio picked up the voice of a radio operator on board the Mount Olympus, of the Central Group.

—Mount Olympus, Mount Olympus, do you read me clearly?

"Loud and clear. Identify yourself."

John spoke slowly, emphasising every word.

"This is the Special Attack Team in Antarctica. Captain Patrick Malone of the United States Navy wishes to speak to Admiral Creuzen aboard the Mount Olympus. It is very urgent."

The voice on the other end of the radio was silent for a few seconds , seemed hesitant, but continued:

—Special Team, stay on this frequency.

For a few minutes, silence reigned; then the admiral's voice rang out clearly.

"Captain Malone, this is Admiral Creuzen. Please give me your position and your current situation."

Patrick recognised the voice without difficulty.

—Admiral Creuzen, this is Captain Malone aboard the submarine U-2193. We have been unable to make contact with Admiral Byrd, so I have decided to speak to you. You were already aware of our mission, and I can inform you that we have entered the German base known as 211, which is located off Berkner Island. We have engaged enemy forces and I can now report that we have taken the base's harbour. We have suffered some casualties and our wounded are receiving medical attention on board the submarine. We are currently on standby to move ashore into the base and require orders from a superior to continue the mission.

Creuzen seemed to listen attentively to Patrick's words.

"I congratulate you and your men, Captain Malone. Your action at Base 211 is vital to the smooth running of the joint sea and land operation we intend to carry out. I order you to continue the capture of the base as far as possible and to destroy everything that poses a threat to the entire operation. For now, Captain, your mission has spared us the danger posed by the submarines, but bear in mind that we are facing a determined enemy with weapons that exceed our capabilities — upon hearing this, everyone looked at one another with concern. I can report that we are encountering difficulties both logistically and *meteorologically,* as well as with an elusive enemy that attacks by surprise with unfamiliar weapons and has already caused us damage and casualties. Therefore, Captain Malone, your mission is crucial and you must continue with it. We will remain in contact and I will inform Admiral Byrd of your situation. Best wishes to you all and good luck. Over and out.

Patrick looked at his men.

"At your command, Admiral Creuzen. We're continuing the mission." Over and out.

"You've heard him. We must carry on," said Patrick, setting down the headphones he'd been wearing, even though the transmission had also been broadcast over the radio room's powerful loudspeaker .

"Enneth, we need to bring a military detachment on board that's in constant communication with us. I'll speak to Brown about stationing two men at the power station. I want someone who speaks German to stay behind; we might need them."

"All right, Patrick. Let me see what we've got and I'll let you know straight away."

The group left the radio room and went to see Dr Philip L. Hill to find out the condition of the wounded. Dr Hill stopped what he was doing with the patient he was operating on and looked at Patrick. He looked like a butcher. He had performed two amputations and a multitude of various treatments.

"I'll need blood, Captain. It's very urgent."

Several men were lying on cots that had been set up after having They had been treated and were hooked up to IV drips that were keeping them alive after their operations. Eric Jones and Allan Perkins were doing a magnificent job.

—They've been a great help, but they're exhausted.

‘Doctor, you must now finish your work with the patients. Then they can rest, and so can you,’ he said, before turning to his companions. ‘The doctor needs blood.

Everyone volunteered immediately. Kenneth called Brown, and several of his men donated as well.

Once finished, Kenneth turned to Patrick.

—Let’s see what you think… I believe the submarine will need a minimum crew, not just military personnel, but a full crew. So, I’ve decided that Bert Eklund, Stan White, Dave Holms, George Connors, John ‘Bullet’, Allan Perkins, Eric Jones and Dr Hill should remain on board. Dave and George must stay in the gun turrets with the 30 mm guns, ready for any eventuality. John will be on the radio to keep in contact with us.

—Sounds good to me, Kenneth, but I want you to stay on board too, keeping an eye on things. You’re my second-in-command and I need you on the submarine.

Kenneth was taken aback by Patrick’s suggestion.

‘You know I want to go with you. You’ll need men to fight there.’

“True, Kenneth,” Patrick placed his hand on his second-in-command’s shoulder. “But your place in the fight is here. You’re more useful to me on board. Believe me.”

Kenneth, though annoyed, knew he couldn’t argue with Patrick at that moment. He accepted what was asked of him. They said goodbye to their comrades, who made their way out through the side door of the submarine’s conning tower.

With everything ready and orders issued, the team of some 33 commandos, plus the divers, returned to the makeshift observation post at the top of the ruined command building. Brown was in charge of the entire assault group, with the exception of Patrick’s men, who would act as liaison officers as they advanced. In fact, they would be at the rear of the group with the radio equipment. In theory, they were not supposed to engage in combat, but Patrick knew that was pure theory and so he equipped his men with as much weaponry as possible, survival rations and, above all, had them don their American uniforms once more. Once they were all in the assembly area, they synchronised their watches and went over the final instructions. Two commandos returned at 1:1

power station as a holding point. They were heavily armed and would blow up the entire station in case of trouble. They would remain in visual and radio contact with U-2193.

Brown's first men began to move towards the interior of Base 211. Everything seemed quiet for the moment. They reached a sort of central avenue, from which smaller streets branched off on both sides. The emblem of the

/A map of Antarctica, upside down, was placed on each door as they left them behind. A vehicle resembling an NSU Fiettenrad Sd. Kfz lay abandoned and was observed with curiosity by Patrick. It seemed as though everyone had fled inland, leaving everything exactly as it was. Where could they be? Had they already surrendered? Would there be no further resistance?

They passed in front of to a small building with the sign 'Kindergarten' on the door beneath the ubiquitous Antarctic emblem

There had been children there! But where were they now? A sense of unease gripped the group. They passed a building that looked like a laboratory or a small factory. It wasn't clear. As they looked at it, a noise grew louder and came towards them. It was the sound of vehicles approaching. Everyone took cover and reported the situation to the submarine.

The lighting in the enormous cavern was gradually fading, suggesting it was being controlled from elsewhere on the base. They were being waited for! Total darkness fell

§;The space grew tighter and fear spread through the group. Soon there would be no light at all, and they couldn't turn on their torches without risking detection. The situation was getting more complicated as the vehicles drew nearer. They seemed to have no trouble making their way through the darkness. Brown's voice rang out amid the growing din, addressing his men.

"Everyone take cover! They've got infrared sights!"

No sooner had he finished his warning than bursts of machine-gun fire rang out. Several men from the commando unit fell, struck by the STG44s. Shots were also fired by snipers armed with the Vampyr infrared sight, which once again caused heavy casualties among the commando unit members. The assault team was decimated. The cries of pain from some of the wounded could be heard, but

could be done to help them in those circumstances. i!88

Patrick and his men were behind the wall of a building, and for the moment it seemed they hadn't been spotted.

"Quick, give our position to the submarine and report that we're in the middle of an ambush!"

Böse was operating the field radio. Suddenly, one of Brown's men fired a flare that not only blinded the users of the infrared goggles but also revealed the situation as it stood. And it could not have been more desperate. They were completely surrounded by armoured vehicles of a type they had never seen before and by SS troops, wearing bulletproof vests down to their knees, in such numbers that there could be no doubt as to the outcome of this encounter. Brown could see the state of his men and the dead and wounded lying on the ground. Patrick was also able to assess the situation and realised there was no escape.

The lighting in the cavern suddenly intensified, momentarily blinding all the Americans. Brown emerged from his makeshift hiding place and surrendered, followed by all the men remaining in his command, a total of 14. Patrick was still in hiding with his men.

'If they capture us, they'll shoot us immediately for treason, Captain Malone!' said Reith with obvious desperation.

Böse's face left no room for doubt on the matter either. Patrick had to take control of the situation.

"You're Americans, and that's what your papers say. If we surrender, nothing will happen to you; you'll simply be prisoners like the rest of us. Try not to lose your nerve and just carry on as normal."

'So shall we surrender, Captain?' asked Roger Blaufen without preamble.

Patrick stared at his comrade-in-arms from their many trials at sea.

"You're right, Roger. We must carry on. Let's get out of here and return to the submarine!"

He turned to Böse:

"Contact the submarine and tell them to be ready to set sail immediately. Let's go!"

Sheltered by the commotion of Brown's surrender and what remained of his team, Patrick and his men managed to break through

He made his way to the ruins of the port's command building. They managed to make their way through the streets adjacent to the complex's central avenue without much difficulty. But their movements had been detected, and as they climbed over the rubble to take cover on the other side of the ruins, several armoured vehicles came towards them, firing all their weapons, followed by numerous soldiers, who also opened fire on them. An explosion struck Blaufen, who lay there semi-conscious. He had lost both legs below the knees. Patrick lay down beside him, taking cover from the intense fire from all calibres. Blaufen was in a very bad way. His lips were turning a purplish colour, a clear sign of impending death.

"Go on, Captain. I'm staying here." As *he said* this, and without fully realising that he had lost his legs, he dragged himself painfully behind a concrete block, waiting for one of the assault vehicles to pass. Sure enough, one of them was bearing down relentlessly on him, with several soldiers in tow. When it was level with Blaufen, he pulled the pins from the three hand grenades he was carrying. A colossal explosion set the vehicle ablaze and killed the soldiers following it. The attackers halted their advance for a moment, waiting to see what would happen next.

"Now! Let's go!"

Patrick seized that moment of confusion to order the group to run to the submarine. Without a second thought

• , the whole group set off running. The U-boat's 30 mm guns .2195, began to ring out as the first vehicle appeared over the rubble-strewn hillock. The attackers halted once more in the face of the hail of fire raining down upon them. Brown's two men on sentry duty also broke into a run towards the submarine, just as the charges they had planted in the power station began to explode with a terrible roar. The *echo* produced by the cavern amplified the sounds to the point of almost deafening all those involved. The confusion was immense, but it helped everyone to reach the submarine safely. At that moment, Kenneth detonated one of the charges placed on one of the submarines moored in the harbour. Once again, the resulting roar was earth-shattering. Debris and dust rained down from the cavern's ceiling. The Germans halted their advance once more.

Once inside the submarine, Patrick took command.

"Let's get out of here! Kenneth, turn everything around and let's destroy the base's entrance!"

"We're too close! It's far too dangerous, Patrick!"
Kenneth, almost into Patrick's ear.

"We've got no choice! Torpedo room, prepare tubes 1 and 2!"

Amidst the gunfire echoing off the ship's armoured hull, the submarine rotated until it was facing the entrance tunnel.

"Tubes 1 and 2, ready, Captain!"

The turrets continued to fire relentlessly, keeping the enemy at bay. A fresh explosion on one of the moored submarines caused further confusion amongst the attackers. The U-2193 was now 150 metres from the exit.

"Fire!" ordered Patrick.

Two torpedoes shot out of their tubes towards their target. The huge, heavy door took both hits and for a moment seemed to hold, but suddenly it collapsed with a spectacular crash. The whole submarine shook from the enormous displacement of water caused by the explosion, its hull slamming against the side of the tunnel, bending it as if it were made of paper. The noise of the crash was tremendous. Everything creaked inside the vessel. Several men were thrown against the bulkheads, pipes and valves that were everywhere. Two of the patients fell from their bunks, ripping their IV drips right out. It was an extreme situation.

"Kenneth, full throttle, get us out of here!"

Patrick's order rang out amidst the din of noise and explosions.

"Captain, the depth gauge shows we're losing depth. We're bound *to hit* the keel. Chunks of rock have fallen in and the hatches are under water!" John 'Bullet's' voice couldn't have come at a better time.

"Kenneth, full ahead! Bert, jettison all ballast, bring the sub up as fast as you can! Quickly!"

The manoeuvre allowed them to gain almost a metre on the seabed, but no more.

A brutal creaking sound filled the submarine. It came from the keel and brought the sub to a halt. The momentum sent everyone lurching forwards, crashing to the floor.

"Full astern!" ordered Patrick, whilst Kenneth nodded in agreement.

"Water ingress in the engine room, Captain!" Stan White shouted through the intercom.

Patrick and Kenneth headed in that direction. Water was gushing in and the men were trying to repair the large gash in the keel. They couldn't manage it, nor could they stay in the freezing water for long. Hypothermia was a matter of minutes. They closed the airtight hatch leading to the engine room. It had been sealed tightly, but the enormous volume of water pouring in was a tremendous burden.

"We only have the turbines to move forward, and by for a *short* time!" Kenneth looked at the electric battery charge indicator panel.

"Captain, we're running out of ammunition! We can't hold out any longer."

Connors' voice from one of the gun turrets made the situation even worse.

"Let's take out the last moored submarines!" ordered Patrick.

"But Patrick, we're all going to die!" Kenneth grabbed hold of one of the control wheels for the trim tabs.

"Hold on tight!" Patrick ordered all the crew members over the intercom. Three explosions followed,
causing a flood of water that lifted the U-2195 and carried it through the mouth of the tunnel, flinging it out of the cavern into the open sea.

"I can't believe it!" Kenneth stared intently at Patrick. Patrick smiled.

"Now let's try to repair the engine room, whilst we get away from here, and quickly."

The electric turbines propelled the submarine effortlessly as it moved away from the mouth of Base 211. Ahead of them lay Berkner Island and a huge iceberg, which they managed to avoid. The day was completely overcast, though visibility was relatively good

They had no idea how long it would last. Using bilge pumps, Stan White, Tex Jenkins and Cliff Tubb took on the task of pumping water out of the engine room. The two surviving crew members from the power station also helped with the pumping. They were reeling from the death and capture of their comrades.

Seeing Stan and his men, Blaufen's death came to Patrick's mind after the tense moments they had just been through. He had just lost one of his close friends and crewmates. It was a terrible time, and Stan didn't want to talk about it then. Not only had he been one of the mechanics on his team, they had also been very good friends, and their wives were part of the Christian women's choir at the Norfolk base. On his return, he would have to tell Jenny, and it wasn't going to be easy. How many good times they had shared during the war! Now he was no longer with them, and Stan preferred to focus on repairing his main workshop. There would be time to mourn him later. The task ahead of him and his men was immense. For the moment, two of them took up position at the deck hatch leading into the engine room. From there, they started up one of the bilge pumps, which began to extract water with great force, sending it through a hose a great distance away.

Another of the men, wearing a drysuit and carrying a welding torch so he could work underwater, climbed through that hatch into the engine room once the water level had dropped considerably. The priority now was to seal the leak, or at least reduce it significantly. Without wasting any time, he set to work. Meanwhile, another diver was doing exactly the same thing, but from the outside. The damage had been considerable, but they could repair it sufficiently to make it secure. Whilst the men worked flat out, the submarine remained with its engines shut down to avoid accidents with the propellers. This situation was not the safest, but they had no other option. From the conning tower, Patrick, Kenneth, Reith and Böse scanned the horizon with their binoculars to avoid any surprises. The icy wind was very strong at that moment and made staying in the conning tower very uncomfortable. Patrick looked at the men

Stan's men were on deck, and he could imagine how gruelling that work must have been under those circumstances. He had an extraordinary crew.

Patrick and Kenneth came down from the tower and headed for the radio room.

"We need to speak to Creuzen about what's happened."

Kenneth nodded. They went in and saw John 'Bullet' scanning the dial *for* any possible communication with the members of Operation Highjump.

"I want to speak to Admiral Creuzen, John, on the Central Group's Mount Olympus." John 'Bullet' shook his head.

"It's tricky at the moment, Captain. The bad weather is causing communication problems, but I'll keep trying. I'll put you through as soon as I manage it. Eric's helping the engineers."

"All right, John," Patrick smiled. "I'll be waiting to hear from you." They arrived at the engine room where Stan and his men were

battling like mad against the problems of getting their whole section up and running again. The activity was frantic and the noise deafening.

"The divers are almost done," Stan turned to Patrick, practically shouting in his ear, "and now it's our turn to go in and get all the machinery up and running. We've still got a fair bit of time left, Captain," Stan added, anticipating Patrick's next question and playing down the situation.

"OK, keep me informed," he knew full well he couldn't push his mechanics any further.

Now it was time to wait, even though he didn't like it at that moment. They went back up to the tower, where Reith and Böse were scanning the horizon.

"Nothing new, Captain," said Reith. "It's not the best weather, anyway. It's all cloudy and getting thicker by the minute. Soon we won't be able to see a thing."

Patrick nodded in agreement with Reith's words.

"At least we'll be able to work more calmly," he said, pointing to a map Kenneth was holding. "How far are we from the entrance to Base 211, Kenneth?"

He checked a few details.

"About six miles, Patrick."

"That's a fair distance. I don't think they'll get out of there easily just yet."

Work continued at a steady pace well into the early hours of the morning, which in fact did not feel like night in the strict sense of the word. The engine room was now completely free of water and the crack had been fully repaired. The cold and damp in that part of the submarine were extreme. The divers who repaired the crack from the outside had to work in several shifts because, despite their suits, it was very difficult to stay underwater for long periods. The huge diesel engines had to be primed and readjusted after all the water that had almost submerged them had been removed.

At that moment, John 'Bullet' alerted Patrick to the connection with the aircraft carrier USS Philippine Sea, where Admiral Richard E. Byrd was on board. The sound quality wasn't very good.

'This is Special Attack Unit 1 in Antarctica, Philippine Sea. This is Captain Patrick Malone and I need to speak to Admiral Richard Byrd.

'Don't hang up, Captain,' crackled the voice on the other end of the mic‹›-phone.

Byrd's powerful voice came through loud and clear.

—Captain Malone, what is your situation?

Patrick tried to summarise.

—We're trying to make contact with Admiral Creuzen at Mount Olympus, but we haven't managed it yet. The situation is that the port at Base 211 has been destroyed. We haven't managed to take the base and have lost the commando unit, with some killed and others taken prisoner. We also have no news of Captain Ralph Blankfort of the Navy SEALs. We've managed to get out and are about 6 miles from the entrance to the underground base. We've sustained some damage but are already repairing it.

After a silence from Admiral Byrd.

"That doesn't look good, Captain Malone," several voices could be heard around the admiral. "And what strength does the enemy have, Captain Malone?"

Patrick, too, tried to gather his thoughts in response to the question.

"I'm not sure how to explain it, Admiral, but we've had the chance to see some disc-shaped ships that have nothing to do with...

v‹:r with anything we know. Their propulsion system is a mystery, but I have no doubt that they are superior to our aircraft. They can travel at high speeds, they can hover in the air like a h‹:licopter, they are silent and do not carry conventional weapons. As for the ground troops we have faced, they are German SS soldiers and are equipped with high technology and armoured vehicles of models unknown to us. At this moment, they are superior to us, Admiral. I regret to admit it.

Byrd's voice betrayed his concern.

'I don't have good news either regarding the three groups already there, Captain, who are trying to set up the Little America I base in time for the aircraft carrier's arrival. They are under attack from both land and air. We are facing something that appears to be superior to our conventional weapons.'

After a brief silence from Admiral Byrd, Patrick spoke up clearly:

"What are your orders, Admiral?" Byrd's

voice rang out again.

"You are in a sector that the operation will not attack for the time being, and your mission at Base 211 is now complete. You are to head for our latitude until you rendezvous with the USS Philippine Sea at Scott Island, off the Roos Sea."

Kenneth quickly unfolded the map upon hearing the destination. It was an extremely long journey, involving a detour around half of the Antarctic continent.

'It will take us some time, Admiral Byrd, but we shall head there at full speed.'

"I know, but keep me informed of your route there, Captain Malone. Now I must say to you: Good luck!"

The connection was cut.

Kenneth and Reith were already working on the map, plotting the best route to get there as quickly as possible.

"Look, Patrick," said Kenneth, leaning over the map with Reith at his side, "we've analysed the destination they've asked us to reach, and the best route we've calculated is to return the way we came, that is, heading north"—his words were marked on the chart—. "It's the shortest route, but we'll have to cross the Weddell Sea again, heading towards Cape Horn, then

round the Trinidad Peninsula, here. We'll skirt the peninsula near Deception Island and the British base we destroyed. This time we'll sail across the open sea to Peter I Island in the Bellinghausen Sea, where the Eastern Group is located. We'll keep a good distance from the coast, pass in front of the Amundsen Sea, and once again head further out to sea in a straight line to Scott Island at 70° latitude. Here.

As Kenneth was showing the route, Stan White's voice came over the intercom:

"Captain, we're going to start the engines."

After several attempts, at 5.17 am, the engines roared back to life *as* if nothing had happened. The exhaust pipes spewed out deep black smoke, mixed with traces of water and oil. With the heat they were already beginning to give off, the dampness would soon disappear from the entire engine room. The diesel engines were also needed to charge the batteries, which had become severely depleted. It seemed that everything was returning to normal

.

"Right then, gentlemen, let's get going!" Patrick was finally able to give the order he had been longing to give at that moment.

The entire crew was at their stations and the doctor had already restored order amongst his patients and was sleeping peacefully, whilst Allan Perkins stood guard, for one of them was also in a very serious condition and the worst was feared.

Eric Jones was also asleep after helping the doctor and the mechanics. Everyone had to be on standby anywhere on the submarine.

Chapter 20

PRISONERS OF THE ANTARCTIC EMPIRE

> The engines propelled the enormous submarine with ease on its new voyage across the Antarctic Sea, but this time in a state of full combat readiness, as they could be attacked at any moment.

At any moment. Patrick was certain they would set sail as soon as possible, but more time was still needed to charge the entire set of electric batteries. They left the icebergs behind, along with the difficulty of navigating between them. As they ventured out into the open sea and left Berkne Island behind, the weather began to improve as well. Soon the blue sky appeared in all its splendour and, although it was cold, it felt good to be in the tower.

However, everyone feared that the fine weather might allow enemy ships to take to the air, and so John 'Bullet' and Eric Jorn°s remained alert to any detail that appeared on the screen. As they rounded the Trinidad Peninsula and left the Weddell Sea behind, the electrical system was operating at full capacity, so Patrick gave the order to dive whilst snorkelling on the surface, thereby making the most of the diesel engines' power. Reith reported that the offensive and defensive armament available to U-2193 at that time consisted of one LUT self-guided torpedo, two sea mines and ammunition in the two torpedo tubes totalling some 170 projectiles, which left little scope for attacks and meant they would have to economise on their fire. The amount of diesel fuel in the submarine's tanks allowed it to proceed

…as far as Scott Island, at which point they would have 25% of their fuel remaining, according to Reith's calculations. It was clear that once they had rendezvoused with the USS Philippine Sea, they would need to refuel their tanks. But until then, they would have nothing to worry about. Reith had also calculated that, in the worst-case scenario, that 25 per cent of fuel would allow them to reach the southern Chilean coast, in Patagonia, with plenty to spare. They made contact with the USS Philippine Sea, which had already reached Scott Island. Admiral Byrd gave no indication of any problems, perhaps so as not to alarm them, and ordered further radio contact as they drew nearer. For his part, he was about to begin an aerial reconnaissance mission with the heavy R4D aircraft, which required the assistance of JATO (jet-assisted take-off) rockets under their wings to take off from the aircraft carrier with sufficient thrust. It was a very risky take-off, which had only been attempted before from the aircraft carrier Hornet during the Second World War under Doolittle's command, in a symbolic bombing raid on Japan following Pearl Harbour. Furthermore, to complicate matters further, Byrd wished to land at the Little America IV base, which was not yet under construction.

The submarine was handling the dive well and the repair was holding up fine too. Patrick wondered whether, at a very great depth, the repaired crack would withstand the pressure. He preferred to assume it would. He recalled that on one occasion his submarine, the USS Monitor, had also been repaired in a similar way and had held up. It was also true that the USS Monitor could not go as deep as the U-2193, and the pressures changed drastically. They passed close to Deception Island, where the British base had been attacked and destroyed. Patrick did not want to look. He did not like to remember that incident and felt he would always carry it on his conscience, just like the ship HMS Brighton, sunk near Gibraltar. Now all that seemed a distant memory, and yet only two months had passed. At that moment, Dr Philip L. Hill informed him of the death of the commando, who had been in a very critical condition. After embalming the body and holding a discreet ceremony on the surface, the body was cast into the Antarctic Ocean, where it would rest forever. His personal belongings would be sent to his family as soon as possible.

They were already approaching the Bellinghausen Sea and Peter I Island, the area of operations for the Eastern Group, which included the seaplane tender USS Pine Island, the destroyer USS Brownson and the tanker and supply ship USS Canisteo.

Of course, looking through the periscope, there was nothing to suggest good news, as dense columns of smoke could be seen near the coast, which seemed to indicate that perhaps one of the ships in the Eastern Group had been hit. Kenneth said it might be the destroyer USS Bowfin laying a smoke screen to protect the convoy as it approached the coast. Deep down, they weren't at ease, and the image didn't allow for further details. Patrick didn't mention it and accepted Kenneth's explanation, but he had managed to see several flying discs above the area of smoke; however, he preferred not to say anything to his men so as not to create an atmosphere of fear. He needed them all at their best. He had to continue his journey without further complications; they couldn't help the Eastern Group.

After two weeks at sea, the Ross Sea came into view. Their course now took them more than 500 miles out to sea, heading towards Scott Island. Radio contact with the USS Philippine Sea remained unproblematic, but it was clear from their comments and tone that things were not going well. The East Group had lost the tanker USS Canisteo, which made resupplying the group extremely difficult. The destroyer USS Brownson had also been hit and was staying afloat almost by a miracle, but with serious damage. The Central Group had begun setting up the Little America IV base with many difficulties, both meteorological and military.

'Captain Malone, how far are you from Scott Island?' asked Admiral Byrd after a pause.

'We're already about 130 miles away, Admiral,' Patrick replied quickly, reading the data Reith had provided him. 'We'll be there by dawn tomorrow, sir.'

"Very well. I imagine you'll want to refuel and restock your submarine."

—That's right, Admiral. I also have several wounded who need medical attention at a more suitable and spacious facility.

—Understood. We'll be waiting for you.

In the early hours of the following day, now on the surface, they made their first visual contact with the modern aircraft carrier. The day was grey, but the sea was calm with a cold yet gentle wind and fairly decent visibility. From the bridge, they sent a message in Morse code using one of the powerful searchlights, signalling their presence. The distance was about four miles and was rapidly closing. The aircraft carrier was off the coast of Scott Island, as it could not anchor any closer. Patrick, in his cabin, was glad that his mission was over and that he was now under the protection of the powerful warship. They would have to plan the return to the United States, but first, from the aircraft carrier, he would try to get in touch with Vice-Admiral Clark. They had not been in contact since he had been in Antarctic waters. Now came a gruelling period of writing reports and answering thousands of questions about what had happened at every turn. But they would be home, and Betty would be with him again.

He stood up to put a document on one of the shelves. He couldn't. A violent jolt knocked him off balance and he almost fell to the floor. He thought they'd hit something. He hurried out of his room.

'What's happening!' The men on the bridge had also felt the mysterious jolt. They looked at him in surprise. They didn't know anything either. At that moment, Kenneth peered out through the hatch leading to the tower.

"Patrick, come up immediately! We're lost!"

Reaching the tower was very difficult, because the jolts were continuing. Suddenly they ceased and absolute calm filled the air. Patrick arrived at that moment outside the tower, where the others' faces were contorted with horror.

"What's going on, Kenneth?"

Before he could answer, the first thing that caught Patrick's attention was that the aircraft carrier USS Philippine Sea was beneath them.

"That's impossible," he thought, quite logically.

He looked up and discovered to his horror that two German flying saucers had lifted the U-2193 out of the water and were transporting it through the air towards the interior of the Antarctic continent at an enormous speed

speed. It must have been a very powerful electromagnetic system, because the discs did not touch the submarine, so it seemed to be flying beneath them. It was inconceivable and beyond anyone's imagination. They could do nothing. They could not imagine where they were being taken, but it could not be anything good. They had destroyed the port of Base 211, and that was why they had been captured cleanly as soon as possible, right under the noses of Admiral Byrd and the USS Philippine Sea.

The incredible flight continued for quite some time; it was impossible to remain in the tower due to the icy wind and the speed, which had increased enormously. Patrick could not explain how this was possible.

'What happens now, Captain?' asked Reith, glancing at the others who, naturally, were thinking the same thing.

"I've no idea, Reith. But I imagine they're taking us to one of their airbases, where we'll no doubt be joined by the rest of the prisoners. I'm convinced that Blankfort didn't achieve his objective after storming the first disc. I also reckon they'll subject us to interrogation."

After these words, everyone remained silent, thinking that what Patrick had said made sense. All they could do was wait.

'I think we're slowing down,' said Kenneth, looking up.

"Yes, that's right. Let's go to the tower," concluded Patrick. They wrapped up warm again against the inclement weather and went outside. Sure enough, the speed had slowed considerably, though the view ahead showed no sign of a landing strip, only a vast plain of ice. (Where were they heading? Suddenly, a rectangular opening appeared, stretching northwards and revealing the entrance to an underground base.

'They can't possibly be planning to go in with the submarine!' exclaimed Patrick in disbelief.

"They are going to do just that, Captain," said Biise with absolute certainty.

Indeed, the flight of the discs and their prey suggested nothing else. They headed towards the entrance, whose immense hatch was almost vertical, revealing titanic hydraulic arms, and entered after a manoeuvre worthy of a place in the annals

of aviation. The submarine was gently set down on supports on the floor of a vast underground hangar of colossal dimensions. The two discs also landed gently and in absolute silence. They emitted no exhaust fumes whatsoever. The hatch closed once the entire group had entered.

The minutes passed slowly inside the submarine.

'What shall we do, Captain?' asked John 'Bullet', who, ever since the submarine had taken flight, had lost all ability to communicate with the outside world.

—We've got no choice but to get out of here and surrender, . Let's see what happens next. (Are you ready?

With a certain bitterness, they nodded in agreement with Patrick's words. The two Germans, Reith and Böse, were very tense in the face of the situation. Dr Philip L Hill appeared at that moment.

'For the time being, the patients will have to stay here, Captain. We can't move them easily.'

Patrick agreed.

'That's true. I think you, Doctor, should stay on board for the time being. We'll explain the situation out there. See you later.'

The party set off and, through the turret's side door, made their way outside. The sight before them was breathtaking. They were in an underground airfield of unimaginable dimensions, where some 20 flying discs of various shapes and sizes were arranged in perfect order, and hundreds of people from different disciplines were watching them from outside. One could easily distinguish soldiers, mechanics, engineers, etc., wearing different uniforms and brightly coloured overalls. There were facilities of all kinds, including a control building with a large observation window. What appeared to be two officers gestured for them to descend via a ladder that had been placed on the side of the hull. Seeing the submarine in those conditions was incredible. As he climbed down, Patrick noticed that the hull was in need of a bit of a tidy-up. It was almost unbelievable how a man could notice such small details, even in situations that were far beyond his capabilities.

The whole group came ashore in their American uniforms and lined up in two rows, standing to attention, with Patrick at the front. The two officers approached him.

"Captain Patrick Malone, is that correct?" asked one of them, with a distinct German accent. He was a smart, cold-looking officer in an Antarctic SS uniform.

Patrick nodded.

"I am Submarine Captain Patrick Malone of the United States of America, and this is my crew. Could you identify yourself, officer?"

The German smiled.

"Don't worry about that now, Captain. It's curious to see an American crew on a German submarine. How is that possible?" he asked with a touch of sarcasm. "According to your Geneva Convention, which you are supposed to adhere to scrupulously, this sort of action is absolutely forbidden, and those who engage in it can be shot without hesitation."

Patrick held the cold German officer's gaze.

'You too have lost the war; Germany has surrendered unconditionally and therefore you are rebels. (What is this whole facility? What do you intend to do with all these weapons? The submarine we were travelling in was being tested by the United States Navy to assess the scope of the innovations it incorporates. It was a submarine of unprecedented power.

The German smiled.

"And that is why you have sunk British ships in Gibraltar and South Africa, and have also attacked the base on Deception Island. I suppose your British friends know the whole story, don't they? You have also attacked Base 211. A curious way to test an enemy vessel..."

Patrick showed no emotion at hearing all this, which indicated the Germans' thorough knowledge of the entire voyage. The officer took out some photos he was carrying in a small leather folder. Speaking in German, he addressed Reith and Böse.

'Well, look who we have here! U-Boot Offizier Wolfgang Reith and U-Boot Offizier Georg Böse, from the original crew of U-2193.'

Patrick stepped between the German and his two companions.

"These men are citizens and military personnel of the United States and are therefore under the jurisdiction of that country. You cannot do anything to them."

Reith and Böse remained silent, as their situation could be considered delicate, to say the least, at that moment. The German officer smiled.

"Oh, really?" He drew his pistol and fired at the two Germans, who fell dead instantly.

"And what do you intend to do now, Captain Malone?"

The two bodies lay in a gruesome heap on the concrete of the German airbase, in the middle of a large pool of blood that was growing.

"They were just two traitors who sold out their country and deserved nothing else."

A heavy silence followed this horrific scene. Patrick couldn't contain himself and lunged at the German, who dodged him and struck him on the head with his weapon. Patrick collapsed unconscious, next to the two corpses.

He didn't know how much time had passed, but he woke up with a terrible headache. He ran his hand over his left ear and felt the bruise he'd received from the German officer. He looked around him. He was in a small, spartan room containing a cot, a table and a chair. A small washbasin could be seen to the left. He got up and splashed water on his face. There was no mirror, so he couldn't tell what he looked like. He thought of his men and the tragic and unjust deaths of the two Germans. It had been terrible. He could hear the hum of a ventilation system supplying air to the small room. The door had no door panel, so he guessed it must be a sliding door operated from the outside. At that moment, he thought of Dr Philip L. Hill and his patients on board – what had become of them?

A while passed and nothing happened. He was starting to get anxious. At the very least, he wanted to know if his men were all right, but there was no one around, nor could he hear any unusual noise. They had
stripped of his watch and his weapon. All he could do was wait. Suddenly, with a soft sound, the door slid open and the German officer he already knew, sadly, appeared before him. He was accompanied by two heavily armed soldiers.

'Captain Malone, come with me.'

He had no choice but to obey him under the circumstances. They stepped out into a wide corridor, with doors on either side and slogans on the walls, written in Gothic script. The interior colour of the facility through which they walked was a sort of yellowish ochre, which gave a certain feeling of warmth on that frozen continent. The temperature was very pleasant. They passed a portrait of the Führer and one of an SS general, whom Patrick could not identify at the time. The group continued at a brisk pace, passing various scientific and technical facilities, where he could see teams of people working on machines and contraptions beyond his comprehension. He received no explanation for any of what was happening before his eyes. Nor could he expect one from someone as cold and ruthless as that SS officer. They kept crossing paths with all sorts of staff walking calmly by, paying no heed to the prisoner.

Suddenly he remembered that the SS general in the photograph was Dr Hans Kammler, the man responsible for all of this, according to secret military reports. He certainly had something to do with it, he thought. They stopped in front of a lift door. The lift, an industrial goods lift, took the whole group on board and began to descend. Through the protective mesh, Patrick could see that the facility extended many metres below the airbase. Once again, he could see military and scientific personnel working on what looked like dark-coloured, geometrically shaped aircraft. He couldn't make sense of those designs. Further back in the enormous facility, he could make out one of Dr Zippermeyer's cannons with its characteristic L-shape. It seemed they were testing it, as at regular intervals it fired a huge flame upwards, from which he deduced there must be an opening to the open sky. The goods lift continued descending many metres further, until the hard stone wall obscured the astonishing facilities. The wall seemed to go on forever, and after more than ten interminable minutes, what appeared to be a 'city' suddenly came into view in front of the lift: very orderly, with its houses, streets, tiny silent vehicles, and people strolling peacefully. There were even children playing! Just like at Base 211, it was perfectly lit. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. That must have been at

half a kilometre deep, he estimated. It was incredible, for it was also an immense cavern. The lift came *to* a halt *with* a sharp jolt and the barred doors swung open on both sides. The group stepped out and made their way towards what appeared to be the main building of that 'city'. Guards at the entrance allowed them to pass. Once again, the photos of the Führer and General Kammler were prominently displayed. The Antarctic emblem with the upside-down world map crowned the room to which Patrick was led. They made him sit at a table, as if waiting for someone. The silence, with his guards present, was total.

A door opened and General Dr Hans Kammler appeared. He looked well, although his sharp, gaunt face and hawk-like eyes suggested that Patrick was in the presence of someone out of the *ordinary*. His immaculate uniform was revealed beneath the leather coat he took off upon entering.

'Good morning, Captain Malone. I am General Hans Kammler of the SS and in charge of the Antarctic empire you have just come to know.

His English was very good. He sat down at the table. Patrick gave a shy nod by way of greeting. Kammler continued:

'You must be wondering what you're doing here. We're the same thing: what are you doing in Antarctica?

Kammler fell silent, waiting for the American submarine captain's reply.

"General Kammler, you know why I am here, and so does the entire operational force of my country that is on the surface. We were aware of your military presence on this continent, and that is a risk the free world cannot tolerate."

'The free world, you say, Captain Malone!' Kammler interrupted. 'I thought you were smarter than that.' The free world, as you call it, is in the hands of international Jewry and Zionism in particular. In your country or any other, observe who owns the major media outlets that shape public opinion, the major banks, the financial sector, Hollywood, the theatre, precious stones, oil, and so on. Even art and science follow predetermined criteria. It is all in the hands of the Jews and their armed wing, Freemasonry. Your country, the United

Are the United States providing cannon fodder for Jewish interests, or don't you realise? You yourself led two groups of Jewish commandos on your mission. Didn't their names—Jericho and Leviticus—strike you as odd? It was a concession, a 'divertissement', a 'boutade'. All the commandos used false, Westernised, 'gentile' names. You were training the future military and secret force of the future state of Israel, genuine terrorists, who, according to the reports I have, will soon have their own state in the Middle East. That will be the root of many problems in the future, have no doubt, Captain.

Patrick recalled the names of the two groups, but not...
I hadn't seen it in that light. I did remember Blankfort's deep hatred Blankfort. Was that his name? By Reith and Böse.

"The two commandos have been killed and the prisoners have been eliminated following exhaustive interrogation. There is no one left, not even the wounded commandos on board the submarine. We, and the Antarctic Empire we are building here and in the Chilean and Argentine Andes, are the last barrier against the slavery represented by Zionism, which our fallen Führer in Berlin was able to foresee with unique foresight and prepare us for the great final trial. Now we shall not fail.

—(But what on earth are you saying, General? —Patrick was beside himself— It's impossible that you could believe such nonsense.

Kammler smiled.

"The so-called Ralph Blankfort was never an American commando, nor did he see action in the Pacific as you have believed until now. He was presented with a false service record, Captain. He played along."

Patrick interrupted.

'I don't know how you know all that, but the superior who made me do it' is someone I trust implicitly.

'Vice-Admiral Clark, you mean?' Kammler smiled
again.

Patrick nodded

—You must know that, apart from having been your father-in-law — Patrick looked surprised to learn that Kammler knew such a detail—, his name is Moshe Yisah, he is the son of a rabbi from New York and he is doing everything in his power to help the future State of Israel. Always

They adapt their names to the country in which they reside. You have been used for their own ends, and the commando's objective was to capture as much German technical equipment as possible. As you will know, the man known as Blankfort seized one of our discs, with the intention of infiltrating our base and seizing, as booty for the future State of Israel, anything of scientific interest that might be found there. This was agreed with the rest of the American force and, naturally, under the strictest secrecy. Unfortunately, he failed in his mission and died. (Captain Malone, this is a ruthless struggle. We cannot show mercy to traitors, nor to an enemy such as Zionism

—Kammler stared intently at Patrick, as if studying his face.

Patrick was devastated. He couldn't make head nor tail of it. His mind was in utter turmoil. If it were true, it was beyond him. He couldn't *believe* that Vice-Admiral Clark had used him and his men in that way. (Was his real name really Moshe Yisah? He'd known him for years, and his daughter too, who had been his wife. Neither of them had ever mentioned to him that they were Jewish.)

Why hadn't he told him, at the very least, during the mission preparations? He wouldn't have minded, and perhaps he would have understood many things that he hadn't managed to grasp until that moment. Did Admiral Byrd know all this? Although some of what Kammler was saying seemed to be well supported by the facts, he couldn't bring himself to believe such a thing.

'Where are my men, General Kammler? I need to know they're all right,' he stammered, with a mixture of anger, helplessness and disbelief, trying to change the subject. 'Please understand.'

Kammler nodded and signalled to one of his assistants who had been present. The assistant stepped aside and spoke to someone on the phone in German. Patrick couldn't make out what was being said.

Kammler stood up.

'I can tell you, Captain Malone, that I have nothing against you. Not even the fact that you used our U-219 3 matters to me. You used a submarine belonging to a country that has officially surrendered. You are a soldier and have acted correctly at all times and in accordance with military code. You have fulfilled your mission to the best of your ability and certainly beyond your

at many times. For that, you can only have my admiration.

Patrick was taken aback by General Kammler's words and did not know whether this was a harbinger of something bad that might follow.

'Now, please accompany my aide. We shall meet again. Goodbye for now, Captain Malone.'

The assistant opened the door to General Kammler's office and, once again accompanied by the armed guards and the SS officer, they made their way towards another building further into the city. He saw a group of children led by a teacher, who was showing them the flowers in a garden. It was a surreal scene, in an underground military facility at the South Pole. The children looked at him curiously and there was some giggling, but they paid him no further attention. They looked well, thought Patrick. The teacher led them on their way, as if nothing were amiss.

They stood in front of a building situated beneath an enormous rock overhang that jutted out horizontally for many metres. It was undoubtedly some sort of prison, as the entire upper section of bare rock gave it a harsh, forbidding appearance. The windows were very small, almost like bunker loopholes. Once again, the guards at the building let them through without any trouble. Once inside, everything changed and it looked like a comfortable, well-lit building. It hardly looked like a prison at all.

'It's not a prison, Captain Malone,' remarked the SS officer suddenly, as if he could guess what Patrick was thinking. 'It's a place of retreat, to find oneself. Sometimes it works
, you know?"

Patrick smiled faintly at the euphemism he had just heard, but didn't think any more of it. He was made to wait in an inner courtyard, and soon his men appeared, filing out through a small door. They were all fine, but their behaviour was strange. Although they recognised him, they didn't act as they usually did. Kenneth, his second-in-command, seemed distracted. They lacked their usual cheerfulness. It looked as though they'd undergone some sort of psychological therapy. Allan Perkins, the cook, began to weep inconsolably upon hearing Patrick's voice as he greeted them.

Allan fainted and Patrick quickly picked him up off the floor. The others, curiously, just stood there watching. As he wiped a handkerchief across his forehead to remove the sweat, he noticed, on one side of his head behind his left ear, that he had a small box implanted there— n't know what it was. He saw that everyone else had the same implant as Allen. It was undoubtedly a form of manipulation affecting the behaviour and psychology of his companions. Patrick ran his hand over his ears, but he didn't have one. This horrified him, as it meant turning a human being into a lifeless, spiritless and totally dependent figure.

He couldn't bear the situation. Kammler had told him they were soldiers and had therefore all done their duty. They might be prisoners, but there should be no reprisals of any kind. What they had done to his men was immoral. He wanted to speak to him immediately. He asked to see the general again, but his request was denied. They sent him back to the room where he had woken up after the blow to the head. After an interminable journey and finding himself alone there once more, he began to think about the situation and how he might escape from that base. Ruling out fleeing on foot, he thought there were only two ways: in one of the discs or in a land vehicle. The disc, although faster, could be very difficult to control properly and would require a pilot. The land vehicle was simpler, and he could surely drive it, but it would take longer to escape and he could be caught and neutralised quickly. He soon returned to reality and realised he was still in that sort of cell and, for the moment, without any hope. The door opened and a soldier left him a tray of food. There was a piece of cheese or something similar and a sort of very red meat that he couldn't identify. The dessert looked like seaweed, but sweet. It was all very strange, but he was hungry and didn't take long to polish off that rather special meal. He wondered why they hadn't implanted him, as they had his companions. He didn't know the answer, but perhaps it was only a matter of time before they implanted it in him too. He certainly didn't fancy that prospect. He had no watch and didn't know whether it was day or night. He was tired and lay down on the bed. It didn't take him long to fall asleep.

Chapter 21

L7\ CAVERN OF WONDERS

A woman's voice woke him. It was a nurse. She was accompanied by an SS soldier.

Captain Malone, you must get up now, have a shower and change your clothes. Here are some fresh clothes. Come with me, please.

Patrick was dazed by this sudden presence at his bedside.

"What time is it?"

The nurse smiled.

"Don't worry about the time, Captain. Just do as I say. You'll feel better."

Patrick had no choice but to obey. He sat on the edge of the bed. Why were they waking him up like this? Were they going to implant the device his companions were carrying? He would try to use the situation to look for a possible escape route. The nurse told him to follow her. Patrick noticed the emblem the nurse wore around her neck, which was the symbol of the Antarctic Empire. They left the room and headed to some nearby bathrooms, where, under the soldier's watchful eye, Patrick took a shower. After the shower, he put on the clothes they had given him—a sort of yellow overalls with the ubiquitous Antarctic symbol on the right side of the chest. Two pockets on either side of the

The waistband finished off the outfit, which fastened with a zip. It was comfortable.

Once he had finished washing, the nurse accompanied him to a canteen where he could have breakfast in the company of other people who appeared to work there and who were not prisoners, as he deduced. He saw on a 24-hour clock that it was 7.30 in the morning. Breakfast consisted of a bowl of milk—though he couldn't tell if it was cow's milk—and some buns with butter or something similar. Everyone ate the same thing there. The truth was, he was hungry, so he didn't worry about the possible origin of the food. At that moment, two soldiers and another SS officer appeared.

'You must come with us, Captain Malone.'

Patrick stood up and was led to a room, where a mirror dominated the space. They made him sit down at a table. Patrick realised they were going to interrogate him. He pictured his men in the same predicament before undergoing the implant. The mirror was surely a fake, and so he thought they would be filming and recording him during the interrogation. The room was also spartan.

The door opened and General Kammler appeared, accompanied by two SS officers, each carrying a folder. They sat down opposite him after making themselves comfortable.

"Good morning, Captain Malone. Did you sleep well?"

'Perfectly, General,' replied Patrick. 'In any case, I tried to speak to you yesterday after seeing my men, but I wasn't allowed to. What have you done to my crew? They've been subjected to some kind of mental-psychological manipulation that prevents them from being themselves. That's prohibited by the Geneva Convention.'

General Kammler opened a folder.

'It is nothing more or less than a security measure, preventing the prisoner from thinking and acting contrary to our interests. They are better off this way; they do not take unnecessary risks and we are more at ease. For your peace of mind, I must tell you that they can be "normalised" again. Do not worry. Now, if you'll allow me, I'd like to introduce you to our medical officer, Dr Hans Gnädig, and Flugleutnant Horst Pahl of Luftflotte 1. I wanted them to accompany me during this conversation I'm about to have with you.

'Is this a conversation or an interrogation, General?' he said Patrick said with a touch of sarcasm.

Kammler smiled.

‘I must tell you, Captain Malone, that I like you. I respect you. I really mean that. But it’s also true that you’ve caused us some problems and that you belong to and fight for an enemy power. So you’ll understand that we need to know certain things about your mission. But I don’t intend to use methods that force you to talk, nor any special drugs. I think it’s best for everyone to have a relaxed, fluid and thorough conversation. Like gentlemen.

Patrick remained composed in the face of Kammler’s words.

‘I am under no obligation to reveal anything beyond my name, rank and the unit to which I belong. You know that, General,’ he replied curtly.

“Technically, and according to the Geneva Convention, that is correct. But I know you are not in a position to demand anything, and that you are willing to cooperate with us regarding information that no longer has any military value.”

‘What do you mean, General?’ Patrick interrupted upon hearing this last statement.

“You know there are three combat groups on the surface attacking your positions. The information I have could potentially disrupt that attack plan and be considered high treason,” Kammler handed Patrick one of the folders containing photographs. “I think you’re mistaken. It’s all over for the aggressors. We’re the ones in the driving seat, and you can see from these photos the damage we’ve already inflicted on their forces.”

The photos showed several ships hit, with plumes of smoke rising from the impacts, downed aircraft and destroyed armoured vehicles. Patrick recognised some of the ships. It was a severe blow to American pride.

“I want to show you something, Captain, that will clear things up for you,” said Kammler.

The lights in the room dimmed and the mirror turned into a cinema screen, which began to show images. The film, in extraordinary colour, had been shot from one of the discs and showed how it, alongside other ships, attacked the Eastern Group. The USS Canisteo exploded in a huge fireball

of fire. Patrick remembered seeing part of that attack through the periscope. Other images showed several aircraft being shot down and low-level fly-bys over what must have been the Little America IV base. Ground troops and their armoured vehicles were also under fierce attack from the flying discs.

It was heartbreaking to see all that. The images stopped—
They shouted, and the light grew brighter once more.

'I can tell you, Captain, that we have captured Admiral
Byrd during one of his reconnaissance flights.

The look on Patrick's face left no doubt as to how surprised he was by the news.

"Two of our discs intercepted his propeller plane in mid-flight and, just like U-2193, he was transported to one of our air bases. He has already been released along with the rest of his crew, and we have given him a clear message regarding our Antarctic empire and our plans.

Patrick was overwhelmed by the barrage of news he
he was receiving.

"Look at this, Captain Malone"—once again the lights dimmed and the screen began to display images. Once again, they had been taken from a flying disc, and a DC-3 in its military R4D variant could be clearly seen flying over the vast Antarctic landscape. The disc passed over the aircraft, and another disc could be seen slightly below it. The plane managed to shut down its engines in mid-flight, yet it continued to hover, remotely controlled by the incredible German craft. It was Admiral Byrd's plane.

The images showed the admiral's plane being guided to an underground base and parked there. The two discs landed alongside it. *Shortly* afterwards, the crew emerged from the DC3 and their astonished comments about the situation they were experiencing could be heard. Admiral Byrd was separated from the others and led to a lift similar to the one Patrick had taken, and was taken to other quarters. There, he could be seen being received by several military personnel, including General Kammler. It was curious to observe how Byrd was neither frightened nor astonished by that extraordinary situation, nor by what his captors were explaining to him. Anyone would have sworn that it all seemed familiar to him . Byrd was

questions of all kinds, and the Germans answered them all without any trouble.

They then showed him the facilities and the latest military equipment they possessed. Byrd seemed very interested in all of it, but deep down it was a threat to American interests. Indeed, just as Kammler had said, Byrd was warned that they must not return there and that if they did, they would use that arsenal, not only in a far more devastating manner than against Operation Highjump, but they would reach American cities with ease and speed. The disastrous outcome of Operation Highjump was intended to serve as a warning for future attempts by the Americans. Byrd looked concerned as he listened to those threats, which were based on military potential beyond any doubt. He stood next to one of the discs and touched the material it was made of. There was nothing like it in the United States.

The footage then showed him returning with his crew—
Once inside the enormous hangar, his plane was launched into the air with the help of the discs and continued its return journey to Little America IV base. The discs followed at a distance until it landed. The filming ended at this point. Once again, the lights grew brighter.

—At this moment, in early February 1947, the entire Operation Highjump is leaving Antarctica and returning to the United States. They have spent no more than eight weeks in the area and have suffered enormous losses. The aircraft carrier USS Philippine Sea, which was the last to arrive, has already left the area ahead of the others, and the aircraft have been grounded for good. They have also abandoned the vehicles and a great deal of equipment of all kinds
—said Horst Pah1, flight lieutenant of Luftflotte 1.

As the lieutenant spoke those words, the screen displayed an image of Antarctica, where arrows indicated, in real time, the position of the ships on their journey back to the United States. The strangest thing was that it was a filmed image, as if taken by a camera in space. But that was impossible! No country had a spacecraft in orbit. How could they film something like that and broadcast it directly in real time? Patrick was utterly devastated. Suddenly

he realised he couldn't escape from Antarctica, that the ships were leaving and leaving him and his comrades behind. It was the end. Kammler stared at him intently. He could see that the American submarine captain was devastated.

"Captain Malone…" Patrick looked up wearily at General Krammler. "I have no intention of keeping you and your men here. To us, you are more of a problem than a solution. You can take my word for it. I know that what you have seen here today may have changed your perception of things." You will have seen that the technical level we enjoy and are constantly developing is far beyond anything your scientists in the United States have ever dreamed of. We have always been ahead of you, including during the last war. You are no real threat to us. You are more useful in explaining just how terrible all this is and what a waste of time it is to attack us.

Patrick caught his breath.

"We will not allow a facility like yours to remain in operation for much longer. It continues to pose a threat to free and democratic nations. I am certain that all the work you are doing here is part of a larger plan. I don't believe this all begins and ends here, as that would render the whole endeavour pointless. What exactly do you intend to do, General? What is the purpose of all this effort?"

"This endeavour, Captain," Kammler began, "makes sense when one belongs to an unwavering elite such as ours. We have always known that we were right when our movement began in 1923 in the Feldherrnhalle in Munich and fought, with our Führer at the helm, to defend European values against the Asian hordes, international Zionism and the multiracial society such as that of your country. In that titanic effort, Beflín fell, and so did our Führer. Those extraordinary events have taught us that the new conquest will no longer be so much a military one, as it sought to be, but rather one of conviction and faith.

Patrick looked at General Kammler as he set out his reasoning.

'We,' continued Kammler, 'the members of the SS, have three immutable rules: The first is that our honour is

our loyalty. This is what we express on the buckles of our belts. The second is that we are the Schutzstaffel, hence our SS emblem. But what many do not know is that, for an elite circle within our ranks, the name SS stands for Schwarze Sonne, or Black Sun, and that is something beyond your comprehension, Captain Malone. We are speaking of a new way of understanding the world, science, the spirit and the human being as a whole. The Research and Development section that I led during the war and subsequently here in Antarctica is made up of the finest scientists you can imagine. We have sought out, discovered and developed sciences lost in time, sciences very different from what we call 'Jewish physics' and its theory of relativity. Our 'Aryan' science is in line with the 'torsion fields' that affect gravity and time, vortical polarisation, the uncertainty principle in connection with quantum mechanics and its mathematical prediction of the flow of vacuum energy or zero-point energy. We know about 'black holes' in space, their extraordinary energy and how they work. We are working on a project we call 'Predetermined Reality', which combines the principles I mentioned earlier. It is something extraordinary.

To Patrick, that explanation made no sense and was nothing he could apply to his own way of life. He didn't understand the meaning of the principles General Kammler was trying to explain. The general realised that Patrick didn't grasp any of it.

'Captain Malone, what I am trying to explain to you has cost many people their lives, and both your compatriots and the Zionists would give their right arm to know all these principles.' Patrick acknowledged his inability to follow the general.

"You must understand, General Kammler, that I am a soldier and I simply obey the orders of my superiors. What you are trying to explain to me goes beyond what I can understand or my capabilities. I am not a scientist or a technician. As a soldier, I do not get into discussions about why one decision or another has been made. That is not my job. I certainly have my own personal views on matters, but they have no bearing on my military duties.

Kammler nodded in agreement after these words by Patrick.

'That's the problem with Americans and their practical approach to life. They're lazy and conformist, and they don't look beyond what they understand. You, Captain, are the classic product of that lifestyle and the upbringing they receive. It's a shame, as I hold you in high regard.'

Kammler seemed sincere in this last statement. Patrick felt the time had come to try a move.

'I'm afraid I'm not up to your standard, General Kammler, but I haven't been trained for this, as you've made quite clear.' I am aware of my situation here and that of my men, for whom I am seriously concerned. We are absolutely on our own. They depend on me and their families are waiting for them in the United States. Release us wherever you see fit and we shall not go into further detail with our superiors. As soldiers, as we all are here present, I give you my word of honour as a soldier that this will be the case and I vouch for my men before you.

"I accept, Captain Malone," said Kammler, with the approval of his two aides. "I believe what you say, but you must understand that I'd first like to know some details about Operation Highjump. That's the quid pro quo I'm asking for in return for your proposal. Does that sound fair to you?"

Patrick approved Kammler's proposal, but expanded his request for information regarding the Antarctic facilities and the weapons stationed there. He also wanted his men to remain unaware that he had provided that information. Kammler also agreed to this point with a smile. Patrick went on to recount how the preparation and launch of Operation Highjump had unfolded, along with the secret 'Trojan Horse'-style mission he would carry out with U-2195 at Base 211, which was completely isolated from the three assault groups, though known to the senior leadership of the United States Navy, including its president, Harry Truman. Kammler's aides asked him questions that expanded on the explanation, took some notes and appeared to cross-check certain details against the reports in their folders. After more than three hours, Patrick finished his account, in which he explained in detail—

He recounted in detail the entire journey, from their departure from Norfolk to their arrival at Base 211 and their attempt to meet up with Admiral Byrd aboard the USS Philippine Sea before they were captured along with the submarine.

Kammler seemed satisfied with the explanation. He had asked practically no questions, confining himself to listening to the account.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Captain Malone. Whilst you were speaking, I was thinking that we'll 'normalise' your men. During that phase, which may take a few hours, I'll show you some of our weapons. Then, using one of our ships, we'll take you and your team to a location in Chile, from where you'll be able to continue your journey freely back to your country. What do you think?"

Patrick smiled and replied without hesitation:

—I think that's a fair deal, General. I accept it and thank you for it.

—Patrick felt as though a weight had been lifted
had been lifted from his shoulders; above all, his men would be freed and could all return to the United States.

Kammler made a phone call.

"Your men are going to be 'normalised' immediately," he said after hanging up.

A curious euphemism, thought Patrick, but Kammler was beginning to keep his word.

"I think we should have something to eat first, don't you think, Captain?"

They entered the canteen where each of them received, through a hatch leading to the kitchen, a plate of that strange food.

Patrick couldn't help himself.

'What exactly are we eating, General?'

Kammler, understanding the question, pointed to each of the dishes.

"Our diet consists of food made from Antarctic ingredients. This first course is fish soup, the fillet is emperor penguin meat, and the dessert is seaweed sweetened by our 'chef'," he smiled. "We have a very varied menu. All the dishes are nutritious and provide us with everything we need in these latitudes. You can eat it with complete peace of mind."

Patrick had no qualms about eating those specialities, which were exotic to him. They tasted good. Even the penguin meat was somewhat reminiscent of chicken.

"Right now, our technicians and biologists are working on a beer made from seaweed. I think it'll be very good. They don't always just develop weapons!"

Everyone laughed at the joke. Patrick felt strange sitting in that German Antarctic base, eating that unfamiliar food and sharing a table with one of the men most wanted by his country – even laughing at his jokes! It was surreal, he thought. But he had no other choice, and if acting like that meant he could get out of there as quickly as possible, then so be it. He continued eating in a relaxed atmosphere. He had to be pragmatic.

After dessert, Kammler invited him to accompany him to the underground scientific facilities, beneath the main hangar. He'd already seen them through the goods lift, but now he'd be able to go into some detail. It struck him to see a few Japanese scientists amongst the hundreds of Germans in the area they were visiting.

"Don't be surprised, Captain Malone. They are Japanese nuclear scientists who wish to continue their work and rebuild the Empire of the Rising Sun. They managed to escape the American clutches."

Patrick was taken aback by Kammler's remark and let him know. Kammler smiled.

'Japan was also very advanced in its nuclear research and, with our help, they managed to manufacture at the Konan atomic complex, near Manchuria, the bomb they detonated in Korea on 12 August 1945. They called it the "Genzai Bakudan" and the technician in charge of the team was Yoshio Nishina, a colleague of Niels Bohr, who is here with us. He was in Hiroshima after the explosion of their 'Little Boy' bomb, to measure the effects. I suppose, Captain Malone, that you know you had captured it as war booty at Ohrduf. It was a German atomic bomb, just like 'Fat Man' over Nagasaki, which was captured in Innsbruck.

Patrick could hardly believe what he was hearing.

Indeed, Yoshi or Nishina was a colleague of Niels Bohr, the renowned atomic scientist. The Japanese atomic explosion in

Korea, left American intelligence in a state of consternation, as they had always believed that Japan had only carried out theoretical studies on the atom and did not 'have the talent or the resources to build the bomb'. They may have lacked the resources, but not the talents of renowned Japanese physicists, who fully understood the physical principles of atomic energy as applied to a bomb. Consequently, following the explosion, American intelligence services set about searching for and destroying the cyclotrons that the Japanese might have used to produce radioactive material. It is said that they found five, although according to other sources, the number of secret cyclotrons found was eleven.

The detonation of the 'Genzai Bakudan' on 12 August 1945 – just six days after the bombing of Hiroshima, three days after the bombing of Nagasaki and five days before Japan's surrender – was an extraordinary event. The bomb was transported from the atomic complex in the Konan region to a bay, and the aim of the test was to observe the effect of an atomic bomb on a fleet of ships. One can easily imagine the tension felt by the technicians during the final assembly of the bomb, with Soviet troops in Manchuria advancing, the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki having already been detonated, and a sense of time running out. Before dawn, the technicians and scientists placed the bomb on a ship in the bay of the Konan region. Ships of all kinds were anchored some distance from the coast. The observers were almost 30 kilometres away, and the wait seemed to last an eternity for everyone. Just as the sun rose in the east, there was a flash of light that preceded the classic mushroom cloud, which rose rapidly into the sky with a thunderous roar. When the blast had passed, the ships had vanished. A few days later, Japan surrendered unconditionally.

The tour continued following General Kammler's surprising remarks. The rooms were very large and were divided according to the work or research being carried out there.

'For us, Captain Malone,' Kammler said suddenly, 'atomic energy is a thing of the past, and we believe it is far too dangerous to be an effective weapon. The after-effects are far too damaging.'

They came to a door marked ‘ARTILLERIE’.

“Don’t believe everything you read on the doors, Captain,” smiled Kammler, “come with me.”

This room was much larger than the previous one, and presiding over it was one of Dr Zippermeyer’s ‘Turbulen2gewehr’ cannons, with its classic inverted ‘L’ shape.

“Although this gun has been used successfully against Operation Highjump, it is now technically obsolete. Admiral Byrd has been very lucky.”

They walked round the immense piece of artillery, which looked menacing. Patrick tried to imagine how they could get that monster in and out of there. He couldn’t see any obvious way out.

The group came to a reinforced door, which a guard opened immediately upon their arrival. It was a bunker about 70 metres long and 25 metres wide. The ceiling was 8 or 10 metres high, though Patrick wasn’t sure. It was certainly very high. He wondered for a moment how thick the walls were, but he had no idea. The group looked small in that immense armoured chamber. Kammler approached a device that Patrick could not guess what it might be.

Captain Malone, this device, which we began work on in Germany at Ludwigshafen and which we took to Heidelberg University in July 1943, was developed by IG Farben and is a ‘Death Ray’. We have improved it dramatically on the initial prototypes. We are very proud of it.

Although somewhat sceptical, Patrick looked on with curiosity at the apparatus, which, as Horts Pahl, a Flugleutnant from Luftflotte 1, explained to him, consisted of a quartz parabolic reflector and a one-centimetre-thick polytron, with a space behind the reflector housing various electrical control devices. An electrical circuit ran around the entire perimeter of the bunker. A generator and a transformer completed the installation. In the distance, one could see supports for the objects to be disintegrated, the subject of the various tests. To one side of the bunker was an armoured observation booth for the technicians.

This ‘Death Ray’, in its first version, was mentioned in a US intelligence report declassified in 1998, and

which described the experiments carried out with this parabolic ray gun. In summary, the report stated: “The experiments involved a huge and elaborate apparatus for smashing atoms, the main features of which were four ‘Spruehpole’ (positive terminals) and one ‘Fangpol’ (negative terminal), each about 6 metres high. When fired and the protons were released, they converged through a quartz tube towards the positive terminals or ‘Spruehpole’, from which they were fired at an object placed 800 metres away, on a quartz plate. The result was the complete disintegration of the object”.

“The first of these experiments was carried out between December 1943 and January 1944. A 10-centimetre cube of ST0012-grade steel was disintegrated in a quarter of a second. The target of the second experiment was water, which was contained in a quartz tube, so that the entire tube received the beam discharge. The water disappeared in two-tenths of a second.”

“But the most spectacular experiment was carried out in early April 1944, using 75 rats in an attempt to make them vanish. The experiment was photographed from various angles by surveillance cameras positioned at different points around the facility and controlled remotely from the test tower. There was no trace of smoke, fire or ash on the metal plate where the rats were situated. The explanation for this apparent violation of the laws of physics is that the rats were reduced to gas, which was absorbed by the metal plate where they were situated.”

“Based on the information at our disposal, we can state that the technical principle behind this ray can be adapted for military use in less than two years. However, the current apparatus is extremely complicated and difficult to move easily.”

“Would you like to see a demonstration, Captain?” offered Kammler.

“Of course, General Kammler!” Patrick replied immediately.

The whole group made their way to the armoured cabin to observe the experiment without any problems. At that moment, two soldiers entered and, using a weight-lifting lever, placed a

steel plate onto a concrete support. They then brought three more using the same method and placed them one after the other, very close together. They almost formed a single compacted piece.

"It's from one of the ships of Operation Highjump sunk in our attacks," explained Pahl, "the steel plate is now over 50 centimetres thick."

Through a microphone, the soldiers were ordered to fire the parabolic cannon. They quickly activated the various controls and, at an unimaginable speed and without a sound, a sort of tube of light struck the plate, piercing it without any difficulty. The hole was about 40 centimetres wide, enough to cause serious damage to any ship, aircraft, tank or concrete fortress. Molten metal could be seen hanging like tears from the edges of the hole.

"We could have drilled through anything we wanted, regardless of thickness or material. Nothing can withstand this beam," explained Pahl with satisfaction. "What's more, it can be used on the gunners right there on the spot without causing them any harm, unlike the early prototypes."

Everyone went out and congratulated the soldiers on their work.

"But, Officer Pahl," asked Patrick, as the whole German group looked on curiously, "this gun needs an enormous power source. Here in this bunker you're prepared for it, but out in the open, how do you intend to manage it?"

Kammler gave Pahl a nod.

"Come with me, Captain Malone," said Pahl.

They entered an adjoining room, much smaller, where several scientists were working on various devices. A huge electric arc, rising and falling in pulses, dominated the room. They stood up and stood to attention as they saw the visitors enter. Someone switched off the striking arc.

"Do you see this sort of battery, Captain?" Pah1 showed him what looked like a car battery. "It provides enough power for 100 shots like the one you've seen, and it's rechargeable."

Then, in one corner of the room, there was what looked like a large trunk, with wheels and folded-up side supports.

—The gun is folded away inside this armoured case, which can be opened and made ready to fire in under 30 seconds, thanks to a simple yet ingenious spring mechanism we have developed. The unit carries two batteries like the one I've shown you. One is already installed and connected with a firing safety, and the other is a spare in a handy holder. The barrel can be transported in a vehicle and positioned wherever required. 200 lethal shots await our enemy.

Kammler smiled at his officer's explanations.

Patrick saw that his question had an answer that left no room for doubt. This was highly advanced technology, which was surely superior to that of his own country. In any case, he wasn't giving up.

"But, gentlemen, where do you get the metallurgy for the materials you work with? And more importantly, what is the energy source that powers all this?"

Kammler stepped in to answer the question.

"Your question is very well put and makes perfect sense, Captain, but regarding the first part, I can only tell you that the most delicate part of any material is made here, at another underground base. The rest is made in certain countries abroad."

Patrick thought of Chile, Argentina and South Africa *as* possible candidates, but he didn't know for certain, nor did they provide any further information.

—When it comes to energy, Germany has always sought to be free from any form of energy dependency. We were not only looking for clean energy, but also for a source that was outside the financial circuits governing the origin, control and payment of crude oil, which are in Zionist hands. We work with energy-generation devices based on what we call 'Zero-Point Energy', the origins of which are partly due to a brilliant researcher of Czech origin, Nikola Tesla. We have improved it beyond what even Tesla himself could have imagined, and I can tell you that it works perfectly and produces no waste. The assistance of the naval engineer and inventor Hans Kohler was very important to us; his original aim was to find an inexhaustible propulsion system for ships and submarines. Dr Schumann, who collaborated on this entire project, was captured by his country at the end of the war and transferred there under Operation

Paperclip. I am not going to show you our energy facility, as I told you I would show you some of our modern weapons, and that facility does not fit that criteria. Please understand...

Patrick accepted the situation and, of course, could not help but be impressed.

In 1978, the British government declassified a report by the B.I.O.S. (British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee), referenced as final report No. 104 5, item No. 31, August 1946, which discussed two curious circuits developed by the naval engineer and inventor Hans Kohler and entitled 'Hans Kohler's invention in relation to a possible new source of energy'. The British report outlined various tests and findings carried out by the University of Berlin during the interwar period under the auspices of Dr Schumann, discoverer of the so-called 'Schumann Earth Resonance'. A simple observation of the apparatus developed on the basis of Kohler's research explains the immediate interest of the German Navy, which quickly classified it as secret. The Navy saw it as a silent and unlimited source of *energy* for submarines. The hexagonal construction of the coils, the magnets and the two rotating sub-circuits demonstrates that it operates without any external power source. Engineer Kohler and Dr Schumann knew how to draw energy seemingly from nowhere and run this circuit indefinitely, without external consumption and in a clean manner.

There are many theories as to how far the Germans might have got with this scientific principle applied to various fields, some of them highly intriguing. But it is even more important to know how far the British got, given the more than 25 years after the war during which they had access to all this information and undoubtedly worked on it undisturbed and in secret, until its public declassification. We do not know, nor is it discussed. The British government has gone no further than simply declassifying the German documentation and the comments added by the British technicians themselves. As a final point of interest, and in relation to advances in the field of electricity and circuits, Dr Schumann was involved in the secret development of 'batteries' and 'electric power generators' until 1943, achieving astonishing and futuristic advances in that field.

As they walked down one of the corridors towards another scientific section, and noting the good humour of General Kammler and his entourage, Patrick ventured to ask about the origin of it all.

"General Kammler, how is it possible that Germany managed to to build this entire Antarctic complex without a hitch and in secret, and—if you'll excuse the question—how on earth did you manage to flee from Europe all the way out here? It's beyond me, General.

Kammler stared at the ground as he walked, as if searching for an answer to the question. All that could be heard was the sound of his boots.

"I won't go into details, as it's a very long story, Captain Malone, but long before the war, Germany always had a keen interest in Antarctica. We were interested in many aspects, from the geography to the raw materials found here. It was always clear to us that it was an area that fulfilled many of our principles, including philosophical ones."

They came to an unmarked door, which one of the officers opened for the whole group. In front of them, a goods lift stood waiting with its doors open. Another lift, situated next to the one they were about to board, indicated the presence of a second lift. A soldier was inside, acting as the lift operator for the group. He closed the metal door once everyone had boarded, and began the descent at a speed greater than that of a conventional goods lift. Lights spaced a hundred metres apart illuminated the narrow shaft through which the lift was sliding.

—As I was saying, Captain. It wasn't difficult for us to find the most suitable site for our plans, following extensive surveying work and measurements of all kinds, both on the surface and underground. In Germany, due to the bombing we endured for much of the war, we specialised in drilling work on all types of terrain using brand-new machinery, to build shelters and immense underground factories. The development of drilling machinery saved us from having to use vast numbers of prisoners, who would have had to be fed and housed. We have used those machines here.

Patrick returned to the thread of his last question.

—And how did you end up here?

—You can imagine how difficult it was, Captain, but the truth is that there are countries all over the world that collaborated with us or support our ideas and, despite what happened in Europe, continue to help any political refugee from our cause. I took advantage of that network, which allowed me to leave Europe and make it here.

General Kammler did not go into further detail nor, as Patrick had hoped, tell him which countries they were. Once again, the spectre of South America, South Africa and even Spain loomed in Patrick's mind.

Meanwhile, the goods lift continued to descend, along the bare wall that looked like granite, without passing through any work areas. It felt as though they were heading somewhere quite different. An ascending goods lift, carrying what appeared to be technical staff, crossed paths with the descending one at great speed.

'To Antarctica, and throughout the war, we were able to bring in that machinery, which proved invaluable and absolutely essential to our plans.'

'How far down are we going, General?' asked Patrick, looking around.

"1,577 metres from the underground base where we were. 1,461 metres from the surface," Kammler replied curtly. The figures were impressive. "Those depths aren't bad, Captain," Kammler added proudly, "but we've far exceeded them in other boreholes and other caverns we've already studied." We've reached a vast underground lake, nearly 300 kilometres long and about 50 wide. It's an extraordinary place and very deep. It's a time capsule of the Earth. It's offering us opportunities for very interesting experiments, as no one has set foot there for millions of years.

Suddenly, a sight they would never forget came into view from the lift. The cavern that gradually came into view as they descended was of such staggering dimensions that it dwarfed anything Patrick had seen before. Huge spotlights illuminated part of the cave, which seemed to stretch off into infinity. An indefinite number of...

A group of technicians were moving in front of what looked like a very large metal worm, about 50 metres long and 5 metres high, with chain drive. They reached the end of the journey, the lift stopped and the doors opened. Patrick didn't know how long the descent had taken, but it had seemed short to him despite the depth indicated by the general. A group of those technicians approached General Kammler and showed him some details on a topographical map. Kammler made some comments that Patrick didn't understand. The general returned to the group, who were waiting a short distance from the lift, whilst Patrick looked around the vast chamber.

'You'll see, Captain, how our tunnel-boring machine works ," Kammler told him.

"But, General," asked Patrick, with a touch of common sense, "this naturally formed, vast cavern has already been bored through— why not follow its path and save ourselves the trouble?"

Kammler pointed towards the deep darkness to his left, which stretched into infinity.

"We've already explored that cavern. We've reached the end of it, and it leads to the sea. It may be of interest to us for other purposes in the future. Not for the one we're currently working on."

He asked for the topographical map that the technicians had previously shown him.

"Look, Captain, we're here to the south of what's known as the Trinidad Peninsula," he pointed to a spot east of Neuschwabenland, "and our detectors have located a natural cave at this level that leads through an incredible tunnel all the way to Tierra del Fuego in Chile. In other words, Antarctica is connected to South America via at least one natural tunnel, and we believe there may be more. That would allow us to create what we might call a connecting highway for vehicles and people. The temperature, as you will see, is pleasant throughout Antarctica's underground geothermal system.

Patrick would never have imagined anything like this. These were objectives of a grandeur beyond any normal imagination, though it might make sense to those Germans down there. Kammler continued:

‘Now follow me,’ he said, then signalled to his officers, who nodded in agreement.

One of the technicians approached the group, saying something to the general.

“Your men have already been ‘processed’ and are waiting for you upstairs.”

The news filled Patrick with joy, although at that moment, the tour was still ongoing. They reached the spot where the immense tunnel-boring machine stood, looking like a worm made of polished aluminium. On the side was the name ‘Friedrichs des Groflen’.

That’s what we call it, Captain. It never gives up, just like Frederick the Great.

Kammler smiled as he motioned for Patrick to follow him. They reached the front of the tunnel-boring machine, and Kammler explained that the machine used a parabolic cannon, like the one they’d seen above, to cut its way through the rock by melting it. A series of rotating metal discs with teeth were positioned around the entire circumference of the machine’s head; they chewed up and sent backwards all the rock they removed, leaving the new tunnel clean as they went. As the machine advanced, and due to the heat generated, the tunnel walls were crystallised, meaning they required no further work. It was a perfect finish. The machine had a sort of skip at the rear to collect all the rock and debris it produced.

They entered the machine’s cabin, which was situated in the middle of the vehicle. Inside, three people could work on different tasks. In fact, one was the driver, another operated the parabolic cannon, and the third handled the waste. An air-conditioning and air-purification system allowed the operators to work in the best possible conditions inside the machine. As they looked at the various controls, the three operators entered the cabin and took their places. The driver activated a television screen showing the front view. The screen displayed a sort of target indicating the machine’s angle and inclination, so that the driver could adjust the movement according to specific coordinates. Another small screen showed the rear view of the machine. Everyone else prepared their controls and an external siren began to

A beep sounded, signalling that the machine was starting up. With a sound that surprised Patrick with its softness, the machine began its advance towards the bedrock.

"Hold on tight, Captain. We're going to be standing up," said Kammler.

The sound of the beam drilling through and melting the rock, and the discs scraping against the walls as they formed, dominated the scene. In any case, the interior soundproofing was good. Nor did it move as much as he had imagined at first. Patrick realised that without air conditioning, the machine would have been like an oven, as he could feel some heat. The images on the front screen, illuminated from outside, showed the rock in all its raw form and how it was surprisingly melting in front of the machine.

They advanced about 100 metres and Kammler ordered them to stop and re-back to square one

'What did you think, Captain Malone?' asked the general proudly.

"Impressive, General. I've never seen anything like it. I thank you for your trust."

They went outside and Kammler showed him the finish of the wall of the newly formed tunnel. It was crystallised and rock-hard. You could see some marine fossils in the rock, at the back.

"I believe that in Neuschwabenland, we have the finest collection of fossils in the world," said Kammler. "We have remains of animals that are not catalogued in scientific books. I even have evidence of the prehistoric presence of a highly advanced civilisation that lived in Antarctica when it was ice-free and the latitude was different. It was much warmer and ice-free. When the time comes, we will share all these secrets with the world.

"That's fascinating, General Kammler," said Patrick. "How far does the tunnel-boring machine have to go to reach the cave you've discovered?"

Kammler looked at the machine, which was starting up again.

"It's not much, Captain. About 35 kilometres. That's a short distance in Antarctica. Everything here is on a titanic scale. If our calculations are correct, the natural tunnel we'll have access to could be as long as 3,000 kilometres, as it extends all the way to the Southern Andes."

Kammler made his way to a facility from which the drilling operations were being directed. The rest of the group waited. After a while, during which Patrick continued to observe that fascinating place without restriction, the general returned and brought the visit to a close.

"I suppose you'll be keen to see your men, Captain Malone."

"Without a doubt, General. I appreciate your kindness in allowing me to see all this. I imagine it's not the usual practice."

As they stepped back into the lift, Kammler replied:

—You are certainly the first person outside our organisation to have seen a small part of our capabilities. There is much more to come, but this is enough for you. We have major projects, technical advances and surprises that we wish to share with the world, but first many things must change. I like men on the front line, who fight for an ideal. They have my utmost respect. I consider you to be one of those soldiers, and I know you will honour your word, just as I have honoured mine and will continue to do so until you are all in Chile. Then the world will go its own way, and perhaps in the future we shall meet again in different circumstances, or better ones for everyone.

The lift began its descent to the underground base. They arrived there without further incident. After passing through various sections and work areas, Patrick met up with his men, who were waiting for him in the canteen, eating one of those exotic meals. They were all wearing their distinctive work overalls. Patrick was glad to see them all, and this time they really were the people they had always been. They were his comrades-in-arms once more. They all stood up and greeted their captain warmly.

"We thought you were dead," said Kenneth. "They beat you up after they killed Reith and Böse, and we never heard from you again. We've been locked up in a prison, but it's all a blur. We're really glad you're with us and looking well."

"Listen, Captain," interrupted John 'Bullet', "what's this crap they're feeding us?"

Patrick laughed at his mate's question.

"You can eat it without a worry, John. It's Antarctic food and consists of fish, sea lion meat, emperor penguin and seaweed. Although they change it up frequently to break the monotony."

Everyone looked curiously at their plates, and some pulled faces of disgust upon learning the origin of the food.

"There's nothing else here," Patrick concluded resignedly, faced with those looks of disgust.

"And where have you been, Patrick?" asked Kenneth, a question born of the curiosity shared by all his men.

—When I woke up, I was also questioned and kept in a cell on my own. I've heard from them that Operation Highjup has been cancelled and everyone is returning to the United States.

This news caused alarm amongst the whole team of divers.

—What now, Patrick? What will become of us? Do you know anything else?

—I've managed to negotiate with General Kammler, who heads the Antarctic facility, for us to be taken to a neutral country and from there to the United States.

Faces of resignation and joy appeared at these words.

"At least we'll be going back," said Allan Perkins, the cook, with a smile.

Whilst everyone was discussing the good news, Kenneth wanted to speak to Patrick in private.

'I imagine that good solution must have come at a cost, didn't it, Patrick?

'What do you think, Kenneth?' replied Patrick, staring intently at Kenneth.

'Yes,' he replied.

—You can keep believing that, Kenneth. Everything has its price, and you lot are the most important thing to me when we're on duty. Anyway, don't worry, it's neither serious nor important. I know how to talk, up to a point. But you can't even begin to imagine what they've shown me and what sort of enemies they'd be in the event of a full-scale conflict. We'd better get out of here as soon as possible, believe me.

Kenneth knew Patrick and knew that the matter would not be discussed further. He was surely right, and it was best to seize the opportunity to get out of there immediately and without looking back.

Several SS soldiers, accompanied by the first officer they'd met—the one who'd shot Reith and Böse—entered the canteen's dining area and forced them to follow them to some changing rooms.

'Put your uniforms back on. Here are clean,
labelled. Leave the overalls on that shelf."

Surprised by the Germans' efficiency, they began changing their clothes. Sure enough, every item of clothing bore a tag identifying its owner. Apart from the weapons lying next to their clothes, each man found a small box containing his personal belongings. Everything was labelled perfectly. When they had finished, under the watchful gaze of the SS soldiers, the officer instructed them to follow him. The fourteen submariners arrived at the underground hangar for the discs and were made to wait beneath one of the largest. Huge spheres could be seen beneath the disc, but they could not imagine what they were. At that moment, General Kammler arrived, accompanied by several officers.

"Well, Captain Malone, it is time to say goodbye. Our disc will take you to Chile, near Santiago, from where you will be able to contact the American embassy and be transported back to your country without any problems."

He shook Patrick's hand and gave a two-finger salute to the rest of the group. Then, as they climbed a central ladder leading to the access hatch in the belly of the disc, Kammler handed Patrick a small package.

"Don't open it until you reach Chile. That's an order."

"Very well, General," replied Patrick, not knowing what it was, and added, "Thank you for keeping your word. We're all very grateful to you."

Patrick shook General Kammler's hand again and began climbing the ladder until he disappeared inside the disc.

Chapter 22

CHILE

The journey on the disc was an extraordinary experience. They could hardly believe they were inside a flying vessel like that, heading towards their freedom. Kenneth thought Patrick had done very well. Throughout the flight, they were seated in ergonomic seats behind the two pilots. Screens allowed them a perfect view of the outside, and they were kept informed of the distance, speed, altitude, heading, wind speed, atmospheric pressure and other data they could not identify. A soft hum was the only sound to be heard on board. In less than two hours they were near Santiago de Chile, with the immense Andes mountain range behind them. It was already night. The disc approached the ground gently, landing on a small, inconspicuous plain to the north of the city, some 5 kilometres from the centre.

The group disembarked without incident and, taking advantage of the darkness of the night, set off for the Chilean capital. The disc vanished silently and at high speed. Soon it was nothing more than a dot in the sky, just another star. Patrick unwrapped the package General Kammler had given him. It was Captain Lippsmacher's Luger pistol, which he had carried throughout the Antarctic expedition. It was unloaded, but perfectly oiled. The truth was that with everything that had happened, he hadn't given it a second thought. Kenneth smiled when he saw it and showed him one of the embroidered Antarctic badges he'd

managed to tear off whilst they were changing clothes. They began to laugh at the situation.

They reached the side of a road with little traffic, but which undoubtedly led to the capital. Whilst they were managing to flag down a lorry to give them a lift and were talking to the driver, a highway patrol car pulled up. The American uniforms took the Chilean patrol officers by surprise. Kenneth had some knowledge of Spanish and told the police that they wanted to get to the American embassy in Santiago. He explained that they were soldiers who had got lost during a secret exercise. He made himself understood and the patrol requested a van to take all the men. Shortly afterwards, the van arrived. Everyone settled inside and they set off shortly afterwards. From there, there was a magnificent view of Santiago with its night-time lights. It looked like a city full of life.

'I fancy a beer!' said John 'Bullet' suddenly.

'And I fancy a burger with loads of onions!' added Higgins.

"Calm down, everyone," Patrick cut in. "First, let's sort out our situation at the embassy. Besides, we've got no money on us and they're not going to give us anything for free here. I'*d love to have* many of the things you're talking about too, but right now there are other priorities. There'll be time to celebrate later."

The police van, accompanied by the patrol car, entered the city, which was bustling with traffic. After driving through streets and avenues, it stopped in front of a very pretty Spanish colonial-style mansion with an imposing entrance gate. 'American Embassy' read a sign next to the door. The flagpole could be seen further back, but as it was night-time, the flag had already been lowered, as required. A soldier on guard duty, behind the gate, looked with curiosity and surprise at the group getting out of the police van. Patrick walked over to him after thanking the police officers for their invaluable help.

'I am a US submarine captain, Patrick Malone and those men are part of my crew. We wish to see our country's ambassador.

The soldier was overwhelmed by this sudden presence in an embassy that was usually quiet and uneventful. Chile was

a good posting. The entire guard detail came to watch as hear the soldier speaking to a group.

"Good evening, what's the matter, soldier?"

The guard explained what Patrick had told him, though Patrick was beginning to lose patience with all the military red tape. The newly arrived soldier looked at the group, unable to understand why they were there.

—Sergeant, I've already told the guard who we are and that we need to see the ambassador immediately. Our presence in Chile is classified—do you understand?

"One moment..."

The sergeant spoke to the main building via a telephone in the sentry box, informing them of the unexpected visit. The lights in the building came on and an order was given over the phone to grant the group access. Inside the courtyard, several cars could be seen parked and the sound of people dining could be heard from the rear of the building, where lights were also visible.

The ambassador appeared at that moment.

—I'm sorry for the inconvenience, but I'm having dinner with a group of Chilean and American businessmen. I didn't know a group from the Navy would be coming here tonight. I'm Ambassador Roger C. Whitehill. How can I help you, Captain?

Patrick understood the ambassador's situation.

"Please excuse our presence here at this time, Ambassador, but there was no other way. I am Submarine Captain Patrick Malone, and these men are members of my submarine's crew," Patrick said, showing him his credentials. "We are on a secret mission and must return to Norfolk as soon as possible."

The ambassador looked at Patrick.

'But where on earth have you come from? I don't understand, Captain.'

"I can only tell you that we were part of the contingent sent to Antarctica, under the name Operation Highjump and under the direct orders of Admiral Byrd and Vice-Admiral Vincent Clark in Norfolk, Virginia."

The ambassador paused thoughtfully for a moment.

—The submarine Sennet is in the naval port near Viña del Mar and is currently being repaired for the damage it sustained from icebergs in Antarctica, and you are not the captain

of the Sennet. His name is Joe Isinghour and he is on board whilst it is being repaired. Which submarine are you captain of? Furthermore, your crew is small—where are the others?

Patrick understood the questions, but that could complicate

.

'I have the USS Monitor under my command in the United States, Ambassador. But in Operation Highjump I have had another submarine under my command. However, that is top secret and I cannot tell you, sir.'

The ambassador nodded.

"I see. Then you will understand, Captain Malone, that I must contact Norfolk and verify what you are telling me."

Patrick agreed to the ambassador's suggestion. The ambassador signalled to the sergeant, who quickly approached.

"Sergeant, contact Norfolk immediately via the secure line and inform Vice-Admiral Clark that Captain Malone and several members of his crew are at the American Embassy in Santiago de Chile. Ask him to give a code word that only Captain Malone can answer, and to tell us what we should do with these men."

He then turned to Patrick.

"Now, if you'll excuse me. I must return *to* my guests. You'll let me know immediately what Norfolk has said, and we'll meet again."

They took a seat on the benches in the embassy garden whilst their details were being checked against the Norfolk database. The temperature was cool but pleasant. It was, in fact, summer in those parts, so sitting there wasn't unpleasant.

'I don't understand why they're treating us like this. It's crystal clear that we're Americans and we've got a problem. They should help us right now,' John 'Bullet' was furious about the situation.

'And I'm hungry,' said Higgins.

"You're acting like children," said Kenneth. "What would you do if fourteen uniformed men turned up at your embassy at night, out of the blue, telling a story that made no sense?"

Patrick smiled.

'Everything will be cleared up now and we'll be able to get out of here and go home.

The sergeant returned with several heavily armed guards.

"Search them and take any weapons they're carrying."

"What's going on, Sergeant?" asked Patrick, pushing away the hands of a guard who was trying to search him.

"Don't resist. We don't know who you are, but you're going to the holding cell right now.

The ambassador arrived at that moment.

—It seems there's a problem, Captain Malone, or whatever your name is. Vice-Admiral Clark claims not to know you, but believes you're part of a Nazi commando unit operating in Argentina and that you're now here in Chile. Tomorrow you'll be flown to Norfolk under guard on a military flight.

At that moment, one of the guards handed Patrick's Luger pistol to the ambassador.

"It's unloaded. The rest aren't carrying weapons, sir," he said tersely with a smile.

"An odd gun, Captain. It's all starting to make sense. I reckon it'll be tricky to explain where it came from. Or perhaps it'll be a piece of cake?"

Lock them up!

The whole group was taken to some cellars converted into emergency cells.

"Now we're in a fine mess. And your pistol has been the deciding factor, Patrick," said Kenneth.

"It doesn't matter now, and I'm sure it'll be sorted out when we get to Norfolk. But you gave me that gun and insisted on it, remember?"

They were given some blankets and spent the night without dinner, sleeping on the floor. It was a devastating experience.

At seven o'clock in the morning, they were woken up and taken, the two of them, to an embassy bus heading for Santiago airport. A military aircraft was waiting for them there. The bus drove right up to the aircraft's boarding steps. It was going to be a very long flight with stopovers in several countries before reaching Norfolk, so they had to stay calm, relax and try to enjoy the journey. In Norfolk, everything would be sorted out. Indeed, the flight

He made his first stop in Buenos Aires, then stopped again in Rio de Janeiro, followed by Bogotá, later in Santiago de Cuba, and finally entered US territory. The journey gave him plenty of time to think, and Patrick's head was in a right mess from all that had happened and what he had seen. He thought of his fallen comrades Blaufen, Reith and Böse. They had been excellent comrades. Images of them came to mind. Now they were merely a part of his memory. They would all rest forever on the frozen continent. It was a terrible grave. (How could Vice-Admiral Clark have said such a thing from Norfolk? Perhaps it was a ploy to get them out of Chile quickly and back to normal life in the United States, without further setbacks? Surely that was it. He was looking forward to seeing Betty. He tried to sleep as the plane flew over the Gulf of Mexico. Wait a moment! That wasn't the route to Norfolk. The plane was heading inland, but heading west. What did that mean? His men, experts in navigation, had also noticed the direction the plane was taking. Patrick asked the soldiers on guard where they were heading, but they didn't answer him. He didn't like that.

The plane flew over New Orleans and continued westwards. Perhaps it was heading for San Diego? All they could see below them was land. As night fell, the plane began to lose altitude, apparently intending to land. Patrick reckoned they must be in Colorado, though he wasn't sure. And why there? Sure enough, the plane landed at a military base not far from Denver, in Colorado. There, a military bus with tinted windows picked them up and, after a journey of over two hours along mountain roads, they arrived at an imposing entrance to an underground base, just before dawn. It was the entrance to a military nuclear bunker. They were soon made to disembark and lined up. They were very tired after the exhausting flight, but they stood to attention with pride. An MP approached the group and motioned for them to follow him. Although they were married, they were under close guard. They were led into a room and told to wait. There were benches along the walls around the entire perimeter of the room. They sat down and waited. Patrick didn't have

There was no doubt that they were being watched, but he couldn't see how.

Almost two hours later, the door opened and a military policeman appeared.

"Captain Malone, come with me."

Everyone looked at Patrick, who said goodbye to his colleagues until later. He was taken to an office and seated in a chair facing a spartan desk, with another chair on the other side. Shortly afterwards, Vice-Admiral Clark appeared in the office.

"Vincent, at last. What's going on? (Why are we here?) Clark sat down in the chair.

"All in good time, Patrick. All in good time. I'm glad you're back," he shook his hand. "Now it's important that you explain to me what has happened, but with every detail and, above all, within the German base. I hope you haven't spoken to anyone about this whole matter."

Patrick brushed the question aside and noticed a certain coldness in his ex-father-in-law's manner. He seemed like a different person. Perhaps there had been problems in Norfolk during Operation Highjump and Clark wasn't at his best right now. Without wasting any time and keen to sort everything out, but above all with his men in mind, Patrick began his account.

Clearly, Clark was extremely interested in his experience at the underground base with General Kammler, particularly in the technical details and the futuristic weapons at their disposal. He was surprised to learn that they were digging a tunnel to the Andes and to hear about the drilling systems they were using. He was also very interested in the battle that had taken place at Base 211 and the assurance that it would be out of action for some time. He also enquired about the unit under Blankfort's command and their fate. Patrick confirmed the loss of all its members and that Blankfort had been among the first to fall. He confirmed that the German offensive capability, particularly its air power, remained intact. That was bad news, Clark said. They then went into further detail, but Patrick was already tired and wanted to know what was happening and why they were being treated as enemies or traitors.

'My men are exhausted. You and I have been here for nearly three hours. I still don't know why we're being treated like this, Vincent. We'd all like to go home.'

Vice-Admiral Clark leaned back in his chair.

“That won’t be possible for now, Patrick. What you’ve seen there makes you sensitive targets for our interests and, above all, for those of our enemies. You know too much, and that’s why we went to fetch you from Chile immediately. You can’t go about the world as ordinary people. You’re too valuable.”

—Vincent, I’m in the military just like you. I don’t have your long experience, but I understand military lingo and what you’re saying. Honestly, I don’t think that’s the problem. My team and I may know things, but they’re not as significant as you’d have me believe. It seems to me that you’re trying to hide from me what’s really going on.

Patrick moved towards Clark at the table, as if to say something secret or that couldn’t be overheard:

“What’s your name, Vincent?” Clark looked surprised at this sudden, off-script question.

“What sort of question is that, Patrick? You know perfectly well. You know me very well...”

“At least, that’s what I thought,” said Patrick, with a touch of bitterness in his voice. “General Kammler told me your name was Moshe Yisah and that you were working for the Zionist interests of the future State of Israel in the Middle East.”

“I see you were on rather friendly terms with General Kammler…” said Clark, leaning back in his chair and staring at the table.

“That’s not all, Vincent,” Patrick continued. “I was always struck by the names of the Blankfort strike groups: Jericho and Leviticus. Now I have no doubt that they were Zionist commandos on the hunt for the latest German military technology, for subsequent use in the building of Israel against its enemies. Nor do I have any doubt that Blankfort was not the real name of that commando leader, and I understand his unbridled hatred towards my German crew members.

Without saying a word and staring intently at the table, Vice-Admiral Clark nodded in agreement as Patrick spoke. Patrick fell silent. His mind was racing for explanations, for answers. His whole world was crumbling before him. He continued:

‘Why was Operation Highjump carried out? (What was the real objective? Why have my men and I risked our lives?

The questions echoed through the room.

"Patrick, the information you're asking for is extremely dangerous. Very powerful people are behind it. Believe me, you have no idea what you're getting yourself into. It's none of your business." Forget it —Clark stepped forward, looking at Patrick, and you could tell from his eyes that he still felt something for the man who had once been his son-in-law—.Look, Patrick, Highjump has been a colossal failure. Not a single objective has been met. We've come away with our tails between our legs and with serious losses. Right now the ships are returning to their bases, but they haven't arrived yet. What Byrd and his men faced on the Antarctic surface is beyond any nightmare; you know that only too well. It's been horrific. President Truman is clamouring for us to come up with an acceptable public explanation for what happened in Antarctica. Our national pride is at stake. When the ships arrive, we'll need a good explanation to cover up the failure and, above all, what was down there.

Clark stood up and took a few steps across the small room.

—I want you to know that we're preparing an explanation, starting now in 1947, regarding those German aircraft you've seen, the origin of which must remain a complete mystery to the public. And the explanation will be extraterrestrial. We're going to concoct a grand story for public consumption that will discuss the possibility that Earth is now being visited by beings from other worlds. We have a team of people who will talk about alleged encounters with extraterrestrial ships and beings from other worlds. We already have a name for the ships: 'flying saucers'. (What do you think? Can you imagine, Patrick? —Clark smiled—. It's a sensational idea. Hollywood has already received secret orders to start work on several films on the subject. The bigwigs in the media are already on it and are preparing incredible articles and duly doctored photos. It's a highly professional job. Unlimited budget. The Air Force plans to stage an incident in July this year at one of its bases in New Mexico. The confusion will be immense and will work to our advantage. Let's do this on a grand scale, Patrick. It will be the biggest story of the second half of the twentieth century. We cannot allow the Germans to—

They remain operational and far ahead of us technologically. That regime was demonic in every respect and always will be. It must be buried. Our American people are not ready for this, nor should they ever be ready for anything positive from Hitler's Germany.

Clark sat down.

Someone knocked at the door. A moment later, an orderly entered with coffee for both of them, whilst Patrick listened in silence to the incredible story Clark was telling him, a story that would begin to spread that very year. The vice-admiral poured the coffee and continued his explanation, whilst Patrick sipped his coffee.

—Byrd is already causing us problems. He gave an interview to the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* on § March 1947, whilst on board the *Mount Olympus* on the return journey, which only serves to raise doubts. He has also made fanciful claims that have stirred the imaginations of many journalists, regarding places he claims to have visited in Antarctica. We're starting to get too many awkward questions, Patrick. On the other hand, Forrestal is also against this whole charade I've explained to you. He thinks it's more sensible to prepare public opinion for the possibility of a German attack with those ships. He's mad! That would be a colossal disaster.

Patrick regained his composure for a moment, after trying to take the story in.

"What you're describing will be a spectacular bluff, Vincent. If it's discovered, it will put our government in a very delicate position, having manipulated public opinion. I think it's a mistake to act like this, to be honest, Vincent."

—You see, Patrick, that's the problem. This is a matter of national interest. America is more important than you or me. America will go on, and we will have vanished. Your situation and that of your men are very precarious because of that problem and those qualms. Byrd is too much of a figure in the public eye; Forrest is the Secretary of the Navy and therefore a 'big shot' in our country's bureaucracy and one of the President's men, but you and your men don't exist. You've never been there and therefore you can't talk about it. You could become a problem if you speak out and break our iron

manipulation of public opinion through public and private media.

"But what are you telling me, Vincent? That sounds like a threat to our very lives. I won't let you do that. . !"

He struggled to speak. He tried to stand up, but his legs felt terribly heavy. His head began to spin and he collapsed next to the chair. He couldn't move. The coffee, he thought. Two assistants entered the office and picked up Captain Malone's lifeless body.

"Take him to the operating theatre," said Vice-Admiral Clark curtly. "Let's not waste any more time."

Patrick could see and hear everything around him as they carried him on the stretcher to the operating theatre. The ceiling lights flashed rapidly before his eyes.

"The others have already been neutralised, Vice-Admiral. Only Captain Malone remained."

Although he couldn't see him, Patrick heard Clark's voice as he stood at the foot of the stretcher whilst they moved forward. He spoke with great confidence.

"Excellent. They will be 'normalised' when we deem it necessary."

Just as he began to understand everything, an anaesthetic mask rendered Patrick unconscious.

EPILOGUE

In early February 1947, the icebreaker USS 'Burton Island', which had made a swift journey from San Diego to the meeting point with the Antarctic Note, which was beginning its return journey. The ship delivered supplies and mail to the anxious men on board the vessels. Later, following a different route, the icebreaker USS 'Northwind' towed the USS 'Merrick' to New Zealand to be repaired for the damage sustained in the battle. It was accompanied by the USS 'Yancey', in case they encountered any problems and also to make use of their stay in New Zealand to inspect the hull, which had sustained various damages. Despite a month of repairs, when the USS 'Merrick' arrived in the United States, it was immediately decommissioned. Meanwhile, the USS 'Mount Olympus' remained in the Scott Island area as a radio station with Byrd at Little America IV, whilst the ships gathered north of Antarctica, near Cape Horn. On 22 February, in a swift operation from the USS 'Mount Olympus', Admiral Byrd and the last men remaining at Little America IV were evacuated, despite their refusal to do so. Film, material of interest and personal effects were also recovered. The R4D aircraft were 'cleared' internally of all secret or confidential equipment and abandoned for good. The tents, armoured vehicles and supplies were also left behind for good.

all sorts of things. Because of all this swift action, Creuzen was sentenced shortly after his return to the United States

By 4 March, the fleet was already heading north across the Pacific Ocean from various points in the south. It was an extremely arduous journey until they reached the Chilean coast, as numerous storms and raging seas accompanied them for much of the voyage. The situation was particularly difficult on the icebreakers because their design was intended for calm seas and shorter voyages. The rolling was brutal, and even the most experienced sailors suffered the consequences.

The arrival of the ships at their ports of destination in the United States was accompanied by a highly orchestrated public relations campaign and a series of welcoming ceremonies. The USS Philippine Sea, which was the last to arrive and the first to depart from Antarctica, was received at Quonset Point in mid-February with a grand procession of ships lining its route into the base. The icebreakers reached the west coast in late March. The USS 'Burton Island' docked at San Pedro, whilst the USS 'Northwind' sailed as far as Seattle. In mid-April, the USS 'Mount Olympus', with Byrd and Creuzen on board, sailed up the River Potomac towards the Naval Gun Factory in Washington. A US Navy guard of honour and a band accompanied the ship's arrival. Admiral Byrd had expected President Truman to be present, but he was not there. Present to welcome the 'Antarctic hero' was Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, who was, in effect, Byrd's 'boss'. Standing there, impassive, was one of the future architects of the so-called 'Cold War' policy, whilst the crew, led by Byrd, disembarked from the ship. The former Wall Street lawyer and staunch opponent of communism and Soviet policy tried to appear interested and amused by the inevitable Antarctic penguins that were shown to him. But this time, Forrestal could not hide that fierce, intense and cold temperament that would tear him apart within two years and turn him into a different person.

When the ceremonies were over, the officials returned to their offices, and the admirals, captains and scientists returned to

their homes, and the sailors to their families or to the disreputable bars on 14th Street. Only then, when the crowd had dispersed, was it discovered that three of the penguins had also vanished, their whereabouts unknown. Operation Highjump was over.

It is worth noting that whilst the bulk of Operation Highjump was returning to its ports of destination in California and Virginia, Admiral Byrd made some very strange and thought-provoking statements. The interview took place on the flagship Mount Olympus and was conducted by the journalist Lee Van Atta; it was published in the Santiago de Chile newspaper 'El Mercurio' on 5 March 1947. The article was entitled 'On board the Mount Olympus on the high seas'. In the interview, he stated verbatim: 'Admiral Byrd has declared today that it is imperative for the United States of America to initiate immediate defence measures against hostile polar regions. The admiral does not wish to alarm anyone, but it is a bitter truth that in the event of a new war, the North American continent would be attacked by flying objects capable of travelling from one pole to the other at incredible speeds."



Admiral Byrd aboard one of the R4Ds, during a flight over Antarctica

Admiral Byrd later reiterated all these points, clarifying that they were based on his personal knowledge and experience at both poles, at a conference held under the auspices of the International News Service. Once



the US Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal

in the United States, Admiral Byrd was hospitalised and was never again permitted to hold a press conference. In March 1955, Operation Deepfreeze was carried out under his command, also on the Antarctic continent, where it appears that three atomic bombs were used. He died in Boston in 1957 and there are theories to suit every taste regarding his death.

The fate of Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal is even more mysterious. Shortly after Operation Highjump took place, he began to display strange behaviour and gradually lost the trust of President Harry Truman. Something had changed his demeanour. He even began to 'speak out' about matters that were not particularly convenient for the United States government. He even mentioned the existence of a German underground base in Antarctica. He was admitted to the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, and was forbidden from receiving visitors, including his family. Upon entering the hospital, he said he 'did not expect to leave there alive'. In a decision that was incomprehensible for a patient suffering from anxiety and suicidal thoughts, Forrestal's doctor received orders to admit him to a suite in the VIP area on the 16th floor. It is said that he attempted suicide by hanging himself with his bedsheet tied to a radiator and jumping out of the window. The sheet failed and he fell from the 16th floor, although it has not been proven that this is what happened. It is said he was 'assisted'. It was in the early hours of 22 May 1949. What did Forrestal know that caused his character to change so drastically in such a short time and led him to take such a drastic decision? What anguish could have tormented him? Why was his death so convenient? Who could have benefited? Questions that remain open to this day and remain unresolved.

One of the most fascinating discoveries during Operation Highjump was what came to be known as 'Bunger's Oasis'. On 30 January 1947, one of the reconnaissance flights carried out from the Currituk by a Martin Mariner PBM aircraft commanded by Lieutenant David E. Bunger set off on a routine patrol flight, heading south over Antarctica. When he reached the coast, Lieutenant Bunger set a course westwards. As they flew over a monotonous frozen plain, one of the crew members excitedly pointed out a huge black patch in the middle of that white expanse. As they approached—



The Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, welcomes Admiral Byrd on his arrival at the Washington Navy Yard, aboard the 'Mount Olympus', on 14 April 1947. The admiral is holding a 'Rockhopper' penguin, brought back from Antarctica. Forrestal does not seem particularly interested.

As they approached, they could not believe their eyes. As Bunger described it over the radio, 'they were facing a land of blue and green lakes, brown mountains covered in vegetation, in the midst of the white ice plain'. Bunger flew a reconnaissance mission around the area and then returned to his ship. Several days later, when the weather permitted, Bunger and his men returned to their 'oasis'.



Kenneth Arnold showing a sketch of the type of craft he saw flying in formation over Mount Rainier. Note that it was not round or saucer-shaped, but triangular.

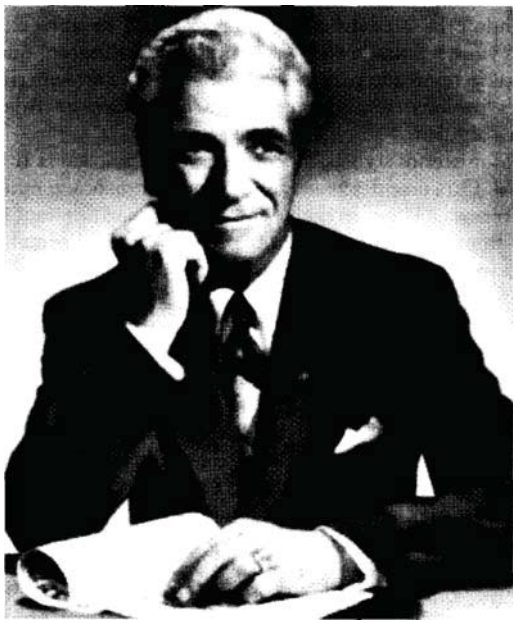
On this occasion, as they were flying in a seaplane, they found a lake large enough to land on. The plane came to a halt on that incredible lake. The water was warm, and the men were able to immerse their arms up to their elbows. The water was slightly salty,
In the lake there were algae of different colours—red, blue and green—which gave the various lakes in the area their characteristic colours.

The pilots felt as though they had 'travelled from the *20th* century to a land thousands of years in the past, when the earth was just beginning to emerge from the ice'. Byrd described it as 'the most important discovery of the entire expedition, and the one of greatest public interest'. Paul Siple complained about the excessive interest the discovery generated and the media coverage it received, which treated it as a veritable Shangri-La. They called it the 'Bunger Oasis'. In the film 'The Secret Land', one can see Lieutenant Bunger's plane flying over the lake, but the footage cuts away at that very moment and moves on to a different sequence. Had they filmed something out of the ordinary? Something that could not be made public? It is interesting to note that this discovery is significant for two reasons: firstly, the inland, warm lakes were connected to the surrounding oceans and could therefore be reached by U-boats without difficulty. Secondly, when Neuschwabenland was mapped, several of these lakes were discovered and investigated in depth as potential refuge areas.

All information regarding Operation Highjump remains classified to this day. It is baffling that this should be the case, given that, in theory, there is nothing to hide, nor did anything out of the ordinary happen. And above all, when Forrestal, Nimitz and even Byrd went so far as to say that the operation had been a great success and that all the intended objectives had been achieved. Or did something out of the *ordinary* happen, and do the United States believe that this information could be detrimental to their national security? What could be dangerous about Operation Highjump in the 21st century? It doesn't seem to make sense 60 years on from those events. Would a well-prepared and well-staged official account collapse in the face of public opinion?
Should they acknowledge situations and events that have been erased from the official history? Who stands to gain from things remaining as they are?

It is curious to note *how* the official emergence of the UFO phenomenon began in mid-1947 in the United States. It was civilian pilot Kenneth Arnold who first sighted a formation of nine unidentified craft near Mount Rainier, in the state of Washington, on 27 June 1947. Arnold gave them the name 'Flying Saucers', a name that became widely used in the world of UFOs.

On 3 July 1947, near Roswell and its air base in Corona, New Mexico, the alleged crash of a flying saucer and the capture of its dying crew took place. According to legend, the bodies of the alleged aliens were taken to Roswell Military Hospital and later flown to Fort Worth Air Base and then to Dayton, Ohio, for autopsies. This affair still causes a stir today and is surely one of the issues that has created the most confusion among the public, who believe that the Air Force is hiding something extraterrestrial. It has been one of the greatest hoaxes in the entire history of UFOs.



George Adanlsky, one of the promoters of the UFO legend

On 27 July 1952, a wave of UFO sightings occurred over the capital, Washington, and its airport. The UFOs performed incredible manoeuvres over the city at extremely high speeds and were attempted to be intercepted by fighter jets. The public were able to follow the movements of the strange craft and their flights. What were these craft? Where did they come from?

In the 1950s, a man named George Adamsky came to prominence, claiming to have made contact with the crew of a 'flying saucer' on 20 November 1952. The craft he claimed to have seen from the inside and to have flown in was identical to the German Haunebaus. By the 1950s, Adamsky was already famous throughout the world; in 1959 he was invited by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands to hear his stories, and in 1963 he was received by Pope John XXIII, who awarded him the Vatican Medal. He died on 23 April 1965 and was buried in Arlington Cemetery, a cemetery reserved for American war heroes and distinguished figures. Why? (Who was George Adamsky?
Was it serving someone?

And the mysteries continue, long after the Second World War had ended. Another baffling area that has sparked much discussion is that of incidents *involving* 'ghost' submarines or German U-boats themselves, long after the war had ended. A report by Agence France-Presse dated 25 September 1946 discussed the persistent rumours of sightings of German submarines in the Tierra del Fuego region, between the southern tip of the American continent and northern Antarctica. That same year, the French magazine 'France Soir' highlighted in an article an encounter with a U-boat, almost a year and a half after the end of the war, involving the Icelandic whaler 'Juliana' in the Antarctic region near the Falkland Islands. The ship was operating in those waters, under the command of Captain Hekla, when a huge German submarine surfaced and flew the official flag of the Third Reich. A group of sailors was sent from the submarine, to the astonishment of the 'Juliana's' crew, and upon reaching the ship, they demanded a share of its freshly caught catch. The request was made in an authoritative manner, and any resistance would have been fatal.

The German officer spoke fluent English and paid for the fish in US dollars, handing over an additional $10 to each member of the 'Juliana's' crew. Whilst the fish was being transferred to the submarine, the German informed Captain Hekla of the exact position of a pod of whales. Later, the 'Juliana' reached the indicated area and indeed found a large whale fishing ground.

Following the fall of Argentine President Perón and the arrival of the new government, the Argentine armed forces began to take a hostile stance towards the 'ghost submarines'. Whilst Perón was in power, there had been a certain degree of 'tolerance' towards these vessels. All that changed, and in February 1957, Argentine naval and military aircraft harassed a ghost submarine that appeared in the Río de la Plata. The pursuit lasted five days, but the intruding vessel managed to escape unscathed. The ghost submarines continued to sail the world's seas, occasionally causing incidents similar to the one that occurred on 30 January 1960 in Golfo Nuevo (Argentina), where the US and Argentine navies failed for nearly a month in their attempt to surround and sink a submarine of the
XXI. On 25 February 1960, the Navy announced the definitive suspension of the search for the unidentified submarine detected in the Gulf. 'Ghost' submarines have also made appearances on several occasions, particularly off the coasts of Norway and Sweden. The media in these countries reported on the military's unsuccessful efforts to sink them. It is therefore not surprising that these vessels feature in books on ufology rather than in history books. Any government, rather than admit its powerlessness in the face of them and, in many cases, fail to discover their true origin, prefers the public to talk of 'men from space' or 'extraterrestrial craft' or 'underwater UFOs'. It is big business.

The seas around Antarctica have always been shrouded in mystery. One of the most incredible incidents took place on 22 September 1979, near Bouvet Island, halfway between South Africa and Antarctica. A nuclear explosion occurred between Bouvet Island and Prince Edward Island. No one has claimed responsibility for the test to date, but

suspicions pointed to South Africa, Israel and even Taiwan. The test was detected by an orbiting satellite and the radioactive cloud was later detected over Antarctic territory that currently belongs to Australia. How is it possible to detonate a nuclear device in secret without any country claiming responsibility? How is it possible that the secret services of the major powers failed to detect such an event in the midst of the 'Cold War'?

Another event shrouded in mystery was the extraordinary series of photographs taken by the British Antarctic Survey during a scientific expedition to Antarctica in 1966. The scientists observed a curious cloud formation that caught their attention as it defied traditional concepts. Whilst taking a series of photographs, a black lightning bolt suddenly emerged from one of



One of the photographs taken by the British Antarctic Survey of a 'Black Lightning'

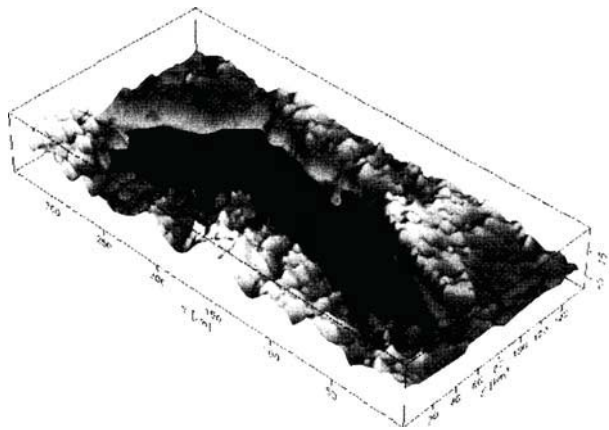
the clouds, striking the frozen ground at an angle and sending up a curtain of snow. The beam bounced off and vanished into the distance. No one has been able to explain what it was, not even the expedition's own scientists, as the phenomenon defied their understanding of physics. What was it? Perhaps someone was using a beam of negative energy? Who could it have been?

But Antarctica and its seas have not only been the scene of inexplicable and unexplained events, geographical disputes, business ventures, fishing, and so on; they have also been the site of astonishing discoveries. In addition to science confirming the existence of very large and deep natural caverns, in 1996, the Russian Vostok base discovered a huge lake beneath the ice of East Antarctica, which has astonished scientists around the world. To locate it, they used a 60 MHz radar capable of penetrating the ice, which confirmed the lake's existence; the initial data indicated it was 250 kilometres long, 40 kilometres wide and had an estimated depth of 400 metres. It *is believed* to be freshwater and to contain 50 times more oxygen than a normal lake. In fact, Lake Vostok is regarded as a time capsule with millions of years trapped within it.

Incredibly, despite being almost 4,000 metres beneath the ice, it was not frozen. Its coordinates were 76.2° S 102° E and 78.4° S 108° E, and it was situated on a complex of Precambrian rocks, which form the craton, or geologically stable area. In May 2005, an island was located in the middle of the lake. In addition to Lake Vostok, scientists have identified some 76 smaller subglacial lakes. Beyond the initial curiosity that the discovery may arouse, Lake Vostok represents a unique region for scientific research, as it could correspond to an extreme terrestrial habitat not yet described, which may contain new forms of life—relic or fossil—as yet unknown, and hold the sedimentary record of the climatic conditions that existed at the onset of glaciation in Antarctica,

Lake Vostok may be located in a tectonically active zone, which would substantially alter our understanding of the geology of East Antarctica and make it a unique location for developing and testing new technologies with a view

to be applied in the exploration of Europa, Jupiter's moon which is believed to contain a deep ocean beneath a layer of ice. The lake can also be used as a sample to understand and analyse the conditions on Earth during the extensive Neoproterozoic glaciations, from 750 to 545 million years ago, a period during which it is speculated that a significant radiation of metazoans may have occurred prior to the Ediacaran Fauna. This name refers to an association of primitive marine organisms, possibly multicellular metazoans, which inhabited the primordial seas some 600 million years ago.



Lake T'ostok in a computer-generated illustration based on existing data

The area of the lake has been estimated on the basis of the unusually flat topography of the ice surface over it. The ice sheet is 10 times flatter over the lake than in the surrounding area. Consequently, using the radar altimetry and interferometry capabilities of the ERS-I satellite, it has been estimated that Lake Vostok extends 280 km in a north-south direction and between 0 and 60 km in an east-west direction. Although the ice surface slopes gently towards the south, the ice flow has been estimated at between 3.7 and 2.2 metres per year towards the east, descending from the prominent elevation known as Ridge B-C.

Seismic surveys have shown that the depth of the lake varies from approximately 670 m at its northern end, through 500 m at a point located beneath Vostok Station where the ice sheet reaches 3,750 m, to just a few tens of metres (10 to 30) in the northern sector, where the ice thickness is 4,150 metres. Furthermore, these studies, together with new experiments and gravimetric data, suggest that the lake conceals up to 4–5 km of sediment accumulated in its central part and some 90–300 m of sediment beneath Vostok Station. Using a laser altimeter, ice-penetrating radar, and gravimetric measurements taken from an aircraft flying over the lake, professors and scientists Studinger, Robin Bell of Lamont-Doherty and Anahita Tikku, then of the University of Tokyo, estimate that Lake Vostok contains approximately 5,400 cubic kilometres of water. These measurements also indicate that the lake is divided into two distinct sub-basins, separated by a narrow mountain range. The water above the mountain range is relatively shallow, around 200 metres, compared to the rest of the lake, where depths range from around 400 metres in the northern basin to around 800 metres in the southern basin. The National Science Foundation (NSF) supported the research. The arrangement of the two basins, their separation, and the characteristics of the water may all, the scientists conclude, have implications for water circulation within the lake.

It is possible, for example, that if the lake water were fresh, the melted water would sink to the bottom of the

basin, limiting the exchange of water between the two basins. A team of scientists who recently investigated the levels of dissolved gases in the remote Antarctic lake discovered that the concentrations of gas in the water were much higher than expected, reaching 2.5 litres of nitrogen and oxygen per kilogram of water. According to the scientists, this high proportion of gases trapped beneath the ice will cause a gaseous 'bubble' when the water is released. Despite the limited information available, it is speculated that the lake occupies a structural depression formed in a fault zone and its origin could be similar to that of Lake Baikal in Russia and Lake Malawi in Africa. This interpretation is based primarily on the narrow, elongated nature of the lake and its total extent. If this hypothesis is correct, the lake could contain a thick sedimentary sequence, high caloric content and possibly geysers.

The ice covering the lake has been drilled near the Russian Vostok station, reaching a depth of 3,623 metres. This drilling began in 1989, long before the lake's existence was confirmed, and was halted some 120 metres above the ice-water interface due to fears of contaminating the lake. The ice core is the longest ever recovered. The top 3,000 metres of the core document the global climate over the last 400,000 years, including climatic cycles corresponding to four ice ages. Between depths of 3,300 and 3,558 metres, the core shows disturbances characteristic of the dynamics of the ice sheet. Beneath this layer of disturbed ice, that is, below 3,538 m, the ice exhibits a marked change in its properties. It features long crystals, very low electrical conductivity and low gas content, all of which suggest that it is ice formed by the freezing of the lake water.

Microorganisms are found in most ice cores, and they are present even at great depths. The presence of prokaryotic microorganisms, including bacteria, along with microalgae and fungi of various types, has been documented at depths of up to 2,750 m, equivalent to 240,000 years in the past. Pollen from

higher plants and dust from various sources, suggesting long-distance airborne transport rather than the growth of these organisms in the area itself. The research also suggests that organisms living in Lake Vostok may have developed special adaptations, such as high concentrations of protective enzymes, in order to survive in the lake's oxygen-rich environment. Such defence mechanisms may also protect life in Lake Vostok from oxygen radicals, the dangerous by-products of oxygen dissociation that cause cellular and DNA damage in animals and plants. This process may be similar to that of organisms which scientists theorise may once have lived on Jupiter's moon, Europa, whose ice shell and atmosphere are thought to contain oxygen and radicals produced by radiation.

The vast size of Lake Vostok suggests that it may have remained in a liquid state throughout its history, even during changes in volume on the Antarctic ice sheet, and may therefore have offered rare opportunities for the development and maintenance of life. Based on studies of temperature and pressure fields, it is estimated that many of the gases dissolved in the water may now be stratified by density as hydrates. This unique *geochemical* environment presents a unique challenge to science and offers an extraordinary opportunity to discover new forms of life. The dynamics of water—alternating melting and freezing in different zones of the water-ice interface, the precipitation of gas hydrates at the base, and ice accretion at the top—create extreme conditions that challenge existing models. The long-term preservation of microorganisms could be a common feature of many subglacial lakes and, therefore, the existence of life in Lake Vostok is possible. Microorganisms have been on Earth for at least 3.7 billion years, developing an incredible biochemical, morphological and physiological diversity. The conditions presumed to exist in Lake Vostok are not so severe as to make microbial life impossible, and these forms could have remained isolated for at least 500,000 or a million years.

Early life may have originated from rock or sediments deposited prior to the glacial cover, or it may have been transported to the base of the ice sheet. However, prolonged isolation from external sources of carbon and solar energy—although one might speculate about some source of geothermal energy—together with the extreme physical and chemical conditions suspected in the waters, may have prevented the development and/or preservation of functional ecosystems in this subglacial lake. Generally speaking, this type of lake would be among the most oligotrophic habitats on the planet, i.e. with low nutrient levels and a low number of organisms. The origin of the lake is a mystery in itself, and the scientific challenges are no less significant than the technological ones. The tools required to penetrate the lake and reach the bottom sediments and even the rocky substrate itself, without contaminating the environment and without introducing any element that might affect the discovery of new forms of life, represent a frontier for human technology at the dawn of the 21st century. The development of sterilisation, sampling and life-detection techniques by NASA will serve as a basis for their implementation in future space missions seeking life on other planets and moons within our Solar System. For all these reasons, Lake Vostok is considered an exceptional site due to its high potential for scientific research and the application of new technologies.

This is what science tells us, based on a great deal of speculation, but will they explain the truth of what lies there once the first exploration team arrives?

Berlin-Sitges, September 2006

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